

Adventures of Furry and Friendly

(9/9/2020)

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Chapter 1—Kitty the Cat

“Come over here!” called out mother Mabel to her twin girls, Elesta and Sharina. “We are going now to welcome our newest neighbours, not too far from here.”

“The farm. With sheep and cattle,” Elesta confirmed, as she and her sister ran towards their mother.

“Maybe there will be children there we can play with!” Sharina said hopefully, as they climbed into the buggy.

“And a whole lot more, I’m sure,” said mother with a smile.

“Here, you girls help to hold on to the baskets and pots of food we are bringing. It’s always a tough thing getting started. So we are going to help them out with what we can,” Mother Mabel said.

The girls got good and comfy, as best as they could, while their daddy took control of the horses and soon they were off. Mother Mabel held the newest addition to their family, their baby brother.

At first they started off singing, one song and then the next, but after awhile they decided it would be great to be quiet and just listen to what was going on around them. It was a pleasant day indeed.

A bird flew low, it seemed to be trying to say hello to the horses, or perhaps to them.

“I wonder what kind of animals they have there?” said one girl to the other.

“I hope they have some we can play with. I guess we’ll just have to see,” her sister replied.

At last they made it to the new farm. They could tell it was a place of residence as the greeting noise of a barking dog made them realise this indeed was a place inhabited by a team of settlers.

“Well, well! Look at you!” said Mother Mabel to the greeting committee of one dog, a stray sheep that should have been led back to the flock by the dog, and a turkey.

“Why don’t you go and take that sheep home,” said Mr. Carpenter, “and let us come and visit without making such a fuss.”

At that, the dog seemed to forget that he was guarding, and started wagging his tail excitedly. There was company visiting. This was exciting. He should be on his best behaviour. And so he calmed down and walked alongside of the family, with a tail that never stopped waving hello to them, or so it seemed.

When the family reached the door of the simple two room house—for they had only just started to set things up—they found no one was there.

Well, no one as in a person. But they weren’t unnoticed.

Kitty the Cat was sitting on the front step, and wouldn’t have budged so much as a whisker to let them in, if it wasn’t for the helpful dog that told her a thing or two, and before too long she was up in the nearest tree, feeling rather embarrassed.

“That’s no way to make a good impression,” she thought. “Now where did I go wrong? I suppose sitting there like I own the place isn’t really the proper way to greet newcomers. I forgot my manners. I should have stepped aside and let them have the honour of stepping on my doorstep. Well, I guess it really isn’t my own, but it nearly is. After all, I use it the most.”

Such thoughts and self talk were going on in the mind of Kitty the Cat, all the while, the visitor were wondering where those were who they had come to see.

After a few minutes, Mr. Carpenter waved when he saw a horse drawing closer to the large enclosure around the small house.

A wave was sent back, and before too long some handshakes were exchanged.

“My! It’s it good to see you all here. How nice of you to come for a friendly visit. Oh, and your girls look so lovely. Would you like to see some of the animals?” Mr. Dweller asked the girls.

They both smiled and nodded, and off they went with their father and Mr. Dweller, while Mabel and the youngest were let into the house.

“Feel free to relax here. My wife is just on her way with the boys. She’ll be glad enough to see you. Women always have plenty they need to talk about, don’t they?” Mr. Dweller said with a smile, then looked at the girls.

“Oh, and you didn’t know about the boys. One is a wee bit younger than you, and the other a bit older, but I think you can all have some fun looking around the place, and seeing how many animals you can spot. Some are welcome, but some are not. If you spot some of the kind that shouldn’t be around, just let me know so I and Rusty our trusty dog, can help with that. Okay?”

The girls nodded, and the four of them walked first of all to where Mrs. Dweller was making her way with the boys.

A hearty greeting was exchanged as they all got to know one another for the first time.

“Mabel, Mr. Carpenter’s wife is waiting for you in the house,” he told his wife.

To which she replied that she wouldn’t keep her waiting any longer.

Chapter 2—A Basket of Gifts

The first thing Mrs. Dweller did was help to unload the food from the buggy that was in the baskets and pots.

“What have we here?” she said while exploring what was given. There was a basket filled with freshly picked produce from their little home garden, some eggs, a bit of cloth, and even a jar of honey, among other things.

“Why, this is just splendid and will get put right to good use. You can never go wrong when offering good hearty food to a family with growing boys to feed and a hard working husband,” Mrs. Dweller said, while thanking Mabel for the gifts.

“No trouble at all,” Mabel replied. “I’m glad to see it can be put to some good use and won’t go to waste.”

“Not one bit!” replied Mrs. Dweller. “Now,” she continued, “is there anything you need, in return. I don’t have much yet in the way of fresh produce, that is that I grew myself. –Unless wool counts for something!” she laughed.

It did grow, and it was harvested—or cut.

“I wouldn’t mind a bit of wool,” said Mabel. “I’d use it to make my baby something warmer for the winter. And a good time it would be starting to prepare it now.”

“A bag of wool then it will be,” Mrs. Dweller said, starting to stuff some into a smaller bag from a very big bag in the corner of the room. The air smelled rather strongly of sheep wool, but that is the way it was, starting off as they were. New rooms could be added later, to accommodate things better.

“Thank you so much for coming,” Mrs. Dweller said to Mabel, after a long chat.

They best be going now, and so Mabel made her way out to find the playful children. They had a dinner to cook and must be on their way.

“Did you see her?” Furry, the kitten whispered to Friendly the puppy.

“Well, I mostly had my eye on the little baby she was carrying. He spotted me right away, even though I was hiding most of the time. He’s a keen little one with great ears,” Friendly replied with a gentle bark, and then settled down by Furry to continue discussing the visit.

Furry, a fluffy white kitten, and Friendly, the black shiny puppy were currently house residents. They had to get bigger to be allowed to explore around the property on their own. Who knows what they’d encounter out in this forest! Their favourite places to be were among the heap of bags of assorted items, or under the Dweller’s bed.

They had observed the whole visit of Mabel and her little one, and were trying to figure out what was going on.

“Do you think we are to be sold as pets to a new family and will be taken far away,” Friendly was wondering. He rather liked it here and didn’t particularly wish to leave.

“Let’s make sure we behave ourselves well then, just in case. We don’t want to give the Dwellers any reason for moving us on,” replied Furry.

The both agreed, that from now on they were to have the best manners. Together they listed what they knew they should or shouldn’t do. Their verbal list went something like this:

--Don’t sleep on their master’s bed.

--Don’t chew up their shoes.

--Don’t chew on their children’s toys.

--When clean laundry is in a basket, don’t sleep in it.

--Eat all the food in the bowl before the bugs trail in to get it.

--Only make barking and meowing sounds in the daytime, be quiet at night.

--Don’t scratch up the furniture.

--Come quickly when called.

--Don’t run off far outside, into the dangerous woods.

--And always be very gentle to the children.

These 10 rules they agreed would make them be the most loveable and enjoyable pets ever in existence.

“No master would ever want us to leave, if we keep these rules and be nice to visitors as well,” Furry said.

Chapter 3—Plotting Mice

Someone was overhearing their conversation, and was trying to be as quiet as a mouse in order to not be detected. Well, it was easy to be as quiet as mouse, because it was a mouse who was trying to stealthily make its way to the new food supplies that just came in.

“Yea! Goodie! Food has come. We were just getting hungry, as we’d finished off the last bit of grain. Well, maybe it was for the people, but we need as much as we can get if we are to going to have a big and strong family of many mice. How else are we going to take over this place if we don’t get a good supply of food?” This had been whispered to another mouse while the ladies’ had been talking.

They made sure to keep their presence well hidden.

There was one obstacle however to reaching the goal of the new food, or more like two things in the way: Furry, a fast mice-grabbing kitten, and Friendly, who was anything but friendly to these dirty, stealing, intruders. They would not be welcome in this place, not while he was on duty.

But when the pets slept, that was the time for mice to munch and march and try to gather forces to take over the place.

“Maybe if there are too many of us, this will cause the guarding creatures to give up,” one of the two mice had said, while plotting their take over.

“But we’ll never grow to a big enough army if we don’t get sufficient food—that is, take enough of their food,” the other replied.

“You’re right,” the first one had nodded in agreement.

They just had to wait until the humans left, and the guarding creatures, that is Furry and Friendly, had gone to sleep, then bites could be taken of the new food that had just come in.

“Oh no! Do we have a mouse here?” Mrs. Dweller had said before, when noticing bites removed from food she kept in the house. But what could she do about it? There was a pile of stuff heaped up, and plenty of places to hide.

This had struck terror into the minds of the listening mice, that they might soon be detected and evicted, or worse. But a consoling thought came to mind.

Said one mouse in the quietest squeak of a whisper:

“Maybe the mistress will think it was that Fur Ball or Black Rascal, their dear own pets, that snuck a bite from her food bags.”

“Yes,” replied the other. “There is always a chance the blame can be placed on them, and we can keep getting away with it.”

However that last whisper was done a bit too loudly, and they were instantly detected.

While Mrs. Dweller was gone to say good-bye to the visiting team and to check on the animals, it was time for a bit of fun, or so Furry and Friendly called it.

“To the catch!” they both said. And in and out of bags and rushing under beds, and around the room they went. They were running, leaping, and grabbing most of all. The chase was on. With two of them, and two mice to capture, they were a good match. These intruders who were trying to take things over, and stay as unseen as possible, weren’t going to get away with it; not if these little black and white guarding creatures could help it.

At last one was taken. Furry was taking it away. Out the little pet door she carted it off, but was soon back again for a bit more fun. At last Friendly had made his catch as well, and off he went out the little pet door to deposit the unwanted intruder, who would no longer intrude.

“Now we can relax! We are worthy pets in deed. It’s not just about how many naps we can take, and the things we don’t do that would upset our master and mistress, but also about the good we do. –That we do what they need us to,” said Friendly, feeling very mature and worthy of being called a pet.

“Meow,” said little Furry. It was quite an exciting day. She was ready for a rest. “Now, where shall I sleep?”

Of course there was her little bed, made of hay and cloth scraps. But she preferred to be a bit more creative. “I’m in a tree-climbing mood,” and up she went. The master’s and mistress’ bed had branches for posts on all four sides. This supported a top level over the bed. This served both as a shelf, as well as a way to hang curtains around, to keep bugs as well as cold air out. –And perhaps a few pets as well.

So up one of the branch posts went Furry, and she perched herself above, snug beside a winter jacket, and soon fell asleep.

Chapter 4—Furry the Kitten

Friendly didn’t have such climbing tools as Furry had. He had different kinds of paws to help him run and walk, for long stretches of land comprised of rocks, mud, plants and such. So for his nap he was quite content to settle down in his proper little bed inside a small dog house in the corner of the main room. After a drink of water, a stretch and yawn, he was settled for a wee nap.

But that nap was quite suddenly interrupted, when the two boys came bursting in the room.

He didn’t want to miss this bit of fun, and so crawled out to greet them. Waging his tail and running around, trying to stand up on his back legs—and of course being told, “Down, Friendly. You mustn’t jump up on me. Down boy!”

He had lots to learn. “Maybe I should add that to the list of rules. I’ll call it the eleventh rule: I must not put my paws up on the humans. They walk on two feet, I am to walk on four. I need to keep leg count and remember. Dog—four; humans, two.”

Since the boys were with him, and there was a small enclosed area on the porch, the boys took Friendly out for a little play. With sticks and a ball made of wrapped up cloth, they played various “fetch and get it” games.

Friendly always liked this play time with the boys. He felt very appreciated as a puppy.

Furry, back in the house, kept right on sleeping. What else was there to do? Besides, from her vantage point, if any more intruders of the mice type were to try creeping in, she could spot them easily. She had a view of the door and much of the floor. She would be a watcher, and a sleeper in between. Just when she'd know to open her eyes, and when to keep them shut, well, she'd just need to go by her instinct, and hope she got it right.

"Meow, meow," came a larger cat's sound in the room. This startled Furry.

It was Kitty the cat, her own mother.

"Meow," replied Furry, and her mother saw where she was.

Soon Furry jumped down to greet Kitty the Cat. They had plenty to talk about. There was the mouse chase, the visitors, and most of all the question of why they were visiting the farm.

"Well, did they bring anything into the house?" Kitty asked Furry. This might give a clue as to why they came.

"The lady brought in some food," Furry replied.

"Well, then I think the reason is clear. The humans are caring about each other. It's not easy to be stationed here in the woods, trying to get a farm going. They were just here for the purpose of carrying," Kitty wisely explained.

"Oh," meowed a relieved Furry. She was glad for that.

"Now, I'm going to check around the area some more. I heard a new team of mice were making their way towards the fort here. You can get back to your nap. I'll see you later," Kitty told her little one, and off she went.

Furry was glad for a caring and understanding mother. Everything was going to be okay.

Chapter 5--Rusty

One fine morning started out with the rising of the sun—as most fine mornings do; well, as every morning did, really. Anyway, the rising sun had the effect of getting just about everyone else to rise as well.

"Curious thing," thought Furry, who had a way of seeing perfectly well even when it was very dark at night. "I don't need the light to see my way around, but it seems humans do. I guess that's why they have little ones like me around. I do have a purpose. And I am glad to be here to keep an eye out for anything unusual or suspicious during the night. Besides, then I can take nice long naps in the day time. I know they are up and around and will take care of things when it's light."

So just when the sun was rising, and the humans were stirring, Kitty the Cat and Furry the Kitten, were ready to find a place to nap, and so they did.

But not so with Friendly the puppy. He was eager for a new day to start. The first thing on the menu of his day was, "Whatever was on the menu." And he hoped a good breakfast was planned. He was sure hungry and ready.

The two boy's first active tasks of the day were to feed the pets. Barol, the older boy went off to feed the outdoor pets: Rusty and Kitty. Shane, the younger boy fed and brushed the young pets, Furry and Friendly. Water was given to all of them.

"We do have good caretakers," Rusty said, after a hearty meal, as he lay down on the front porch.

Though he looked like he was resting, his eyes were never sleepy. He was watching very curiously what was happening in the paddock with the horses and Mr. Dweller. He was giving them a bit of a run, and had even set up some hurdles for them to leap over. This was to give them as much exercise as possible in the corral.

But suddenly one of the horses stopped and neighed up on back legs, and then moved in a different direction.

Mr. Dweller knew something mustn't be right, and so went to check it out.

It was like a cue to Rusty, the trusty watcher and homestead helper. He leapt up from his semi rest and dashed over to see just what was going on.

Instinct told Mr. Dweller, rather than checking it out immediately, he should walk over to the fence of the corral and grab the shovel that was there.

Then together with Rusty he walked over to the place the horse had seen something that troubled him.

Sure enough it was as expected. A large snake was curled up there and ready to strike.

"Get back Rusty!" Mr. Dweller commanded. Rusty knew not to get too close, but did his best to bark, and hoped it would chase this danger away.

With a few moves of his heavy shovel, the danger was no longer that. The way was cleared, and running could resume.

A happy Rusty wagged his tail and walked over with Mr. Dweller, to reassure the horse that all was well again. With a few handfuls of grain, and a soothing voice, Mr. Dweller let the horse know things were safe again. He made his way over to the second horse and did the same. Now they were ready to keep on with their exercise. But first Rusty took a good look around, running a few laps in the corral just to make sure it was safe, and perhaps to have a bit of fun also.

Or maybe he thought, "If I do a few laps, perhaps I'll get fed a treat, and get a pat too!"

Well, if he thought that, he was right. For when he came back, Mr. Dweller did say a, "Good boy. You are a good-boy." Gave him a pat, and pulled out a small corn cob that he'd saved for this moment. Rusty liked chewing on those.

When the horse run was done, Rusty made his way back over to the house. There was lots to be done today. The next job was to escort and safely guard the boys as they collected wood for the fire. For a breakfast to be made, a fire needed to be well stocked up.

Mr. Dweller and his boys headed off. The young ones and Rusty made their way faster ahead, running and laughing, and barking too, as Rusty contributed to the joyful sounds.

When they spotted dry wood they motioned to their father who was catching up.

“This one is good father,” Barol said. “It looks dry enough to be used today, I think.”

Shane began a stick throwing game with Rusty, while the axe was hard at work in the hands of Mr. Dweller, while Barol looked on, hoping to learn the skill. He’d need it if he was to survive in places like this.

Then when the wood was cut, all of them carried as much as they could.

Now Rusty had his job too. On to his back was placed a dual sided sack, and some smaller kindling was placed into it. He liked feeling he was part of the action. While he carried the kindling, the boys and their dad carried the cut pieces of wood both in their arms, as well as some in the sack that father had on his back.

Before too long, the fire in the house was roaring and hot, and a pot of soup was boiling.

A loaf of bread that had been cooked the day before, was added to the table. And today they had the special treat of honey to add to the bread, thanks to the visitors that came by yesterday.

The Dwellers thanked the One above who had helped them survive this far, and who they knew would continue to do so. Then not a moment more was waited as a hearty breakfast was enjoyed.

Chapter 6—Ant Sized Helpers

“Oh good, there’s one!” a little ant called out to his friends. They waited, as close to the base of the kitchen table as possible.

“There’s another one!” another ant called out, each time a bread crumb fell to the floor.

“Not a crumb will go to waste! Let’s get on with the task of clean up,” the leading ant instructed.

These busy ants were ready on the job, nearly before the final word of the prayer for breakfast was spoken. They knew their post and kept patrolling the area, lest a crumble or nibble fall to them.

“There is not time to waste,” said the first ant. He knew that the moment the table was cleared, the broom would be here cleaning things up.

“Or the ants will come...” they’d heard the mistress telling her boys, when they cleaned the place up.

“Why ever don’t they want us to be here?” one ant wondered. “Aren’t we cleaning things up well for them?”

“I think it’s when we do more than clean up that it becomes a problem for them,” another replied. “Like when they got the honey yesterday, and some of us were already making our way to discover it. The mistress had to wipe them off and place the jar in a bowl of water. It was given for them, not for us.”

“Or when we start to think it’s our home, and we bite them as they walked on the floor. I think that’s a no no, as it’s not even our house,” a wise ant joined in to say.

“Well, let’s get on with the task we were meant to do, and clean up these crumbs.”

It was good these ants helped with that task, as if the food was left, things would be worse. Bigger bugs might come, like roaches, or mice also.

It seemed food was the way to get the intruders to come.

“So we must remember not to be greedy, but just do our duty and help keep the place clean,” one older ant instructed the younger ones, who together were trying to pick up a crumb that seemed too big for one to lift on their own.

“It’s good you can help each other, then the job will get done. Being greedy is like when some of us try to all climb into the honey jar, when there is a large roach on the floor that needs to be cleaned up instead. It might not be the funnest of jobs, that is not compared to the tasty honey. But we need to remember what our given duty is, and stick to it.”

“And not just get stuck on honey?” said a little ant.

“Well spoken,” the instructing ant replied.

Then their voice took on a gave tone, as they told of the many ants that had gone missing, some months back.

“A whole team of us were sent out to scout out around the house and porch. There were old bugs to be cleared, and an apple core to be taken as well. But one had gone a bit too far in his search and had found a new jar of honey. He then told several others about it. Rather than finishing their tasks, each of the ants he told, left their patrol zones and headed straight for the honey, leaving things undone. It was a sad and sorry day.”

A little one listening to this story asked, “But what is sad about that? I think honey is the best find to make! I think the whole team would have been very glad.”

“Well,” continued the instructor, “they were very glad at first. But just feeling happy doesn’t mean things are going to go well, if you have left off your duty and are just being greedy for more nice things for yourself.”

“Well, then what happened?” another little one asked.

“They all rushed to the jar that was still partly open. –I suppose the humans learned to be careful for that, but anyway, the ants poured in. And they never did make it out again. That was the sorry end of their search for something better, better than doing what they were told to do, and were meant to be doing.”

“But why didn’t they just climb out again?” one young wondered.

“You see, honey is very sticky, and you have to be very careful if you are going to gather a bit. You have to make sure to get it, and not have it get you—that is get you stuck in it. These ants didn’t realise the danger, until they were too stuck. They didn’t go carefully and check it out slowly. They just saw and smelled what

they thought was good, and then plunged in. But there is often danger lurking around something that appears to be very pleasant.

“So let that be a warning to you, little ants, if something seems extra nice, nearly too good to be true, if it’s different than what you are meant to be doing, there is a good chance that danger is mixed with it. And I’d be very cautious if I were you, before plunging into something else, no matter how tempting it is.

“It’s better to be struggling now to pick up some hearty bread crumbs, and to learn team working and getting stronger in the task, than to be drinking in some pleasure in a sticky jar, if that is the last thing you and your team ever do. We need each of you, so let’s stick together, stick to the task, and don’t get stuck on something somewhere you aren’t meant to be. –Like something made by a bee.”

That was the end of the lesson for that morning, and a team of wiser young ants were determined to stay faithful to their tasks, and then get out of there quickly before a broom came and swept them off. They had to work fast and focused to get those crumbs back to their home, or close by at least, where others could take them the rest of the way. It was hard being an ant, but at least there were lots of them to all pitch in and do the work together.

“At least there is not just four of us, setting up a home, like the humans have right now,” one ant was thinking positively, remembering that even when things seemed hard, there was often someone else or a team of others that had things even harder, in some ways.

“But at least they are sure bigger!” chimed in another little ant.

“Yes, that’s true,” said a wise ant. “Even if some things are harder for someone, there is something that does make it easier. I think all nature is balanced in this way. Our creator does know what to do to help each one make it, somehow.”

Chapter 7—Birds and Seeds

By the time midday came, the Dwellers were ready for some rest, and so was Rusty. But not before he stopped for a chat with Kitty the Cat. Together they sat on the porch to speak about how things were going on the farm. A couple of birds came by as well, to give their report.

One of the birds had been perched on one of the horses for sometime while they nibbled grass in the paddock. She’d been able to get a good idea of how they saw things.

Rusty and Kitty stopped their chatter to listen to what she had to say.

“Well, the horse noticed the storm clouds as well. He said we were in for a bit of a downpour before too long. I just hope it waits up a bit. The farmer was going to do a fair bit of planting this afternoon, I saw him getting the seeds ready... well, I tasted them, and they’ll be good for growing, I know.

“Anyway, after the horse had helped to pull the plough and was resting, we chatted about any way we could help things to go faster, so the work could be done in time,” the bird continued chatting. “The rain falling on the planted crops will be perfect, the best timing. And he might have time to do it, but if something hinders or holds him up, then it might be a bit of a mess. We don’t want the bags of dry seeds to get all soggy and go to waste.”

Kitty and Rusty thought about it. They knew home life better than the birds or the horses did. So they thought it was good to think this through.

Kitty thought up the first idea.

“Maybe I’ll make sure that Furry doesn’t get into anything that she shouldn’t, like making something fall off a shelf and break. This will make more jobs to do, that don’t need to be done.”

Rusty caught on with some helpful suggestions.

“Perhaps I can keep the boys from going too far into the woods exploring. I know that would be a worry for the farmers. Also, I can make sure that Friendly puppy stays where he is meant to, as well.”

The bird added,

“And I’ll keep from eating too many of the farmer’s seeds. Perhaps he doesn’t need help with the eating part yet. That can come later—after they sprout and grow to make many more seeds.”

And so the animals chose to each help out when and where they could, to save the farmer a bit of work.

When supper time came, and the Dweller family sat to give thanks for the humble meal of rice and eggs, even the pets were silent, for a moment. They had seen a special occurrence that day. They knew things were going to be fine.

Just when the farmer finished planting the portion of seeds for the day, and had safely brought any remaining seeds in under shelter, that is when the rain began to fall.

On the porch together, under the sheltering cover, they all watched the rainfall. Gratefulness was in each of their hearts. There was Rusty and Friendly the Puppy, there was Kitty along with Furry, there was Mr. and Mrs. Dweller, along with Barol and Shane, and there sat a couple of birds up on the eaves, and yes, even a few ants who wanted to be spared a muddy home for a while.

It was good to see the crops were planted, and even better to see the rain falling that would be very needed for the success of its growth.

The timing made everyone realise how important they all were to the creator who appreciated those who worked hard, did their duty, and helped each other to survive.

Chapter 8—Messy Mud

The rain had left the land wet, muddy, but most of all a lot greener some days later. This was good for Mr. and Mrs. Dweller, and a whole lot of others. First of all the abundant green grass provided plenty of food for the horses. Happy and healthy, well-fed horses meant a good means of transportation, plus the help of this team of horses to help plough the field. With more ploughed places to grow food, meant a happy and healthy family. With a strong family, they could work together to care for the sheep, goats, cows, and all the other work that came along with it.

All because of rain, at the right time, and in the right amount.

Plus, the stream where they got water from was kept flowing, just enough and not too much. This meant people could be clean, houses could be clean, people could cook and be refreshed; and people and animals could quench their thirst. They needed not only rain into the soil, but rain that had a place to be channelled to them.

A bit of mud on the floor of the house came with the joy of a good rainfall. They had to take the good with the messy, and just not fuss about things that weren't perfect.

Furry however, was having a hard time dealing with it. She sighed one day to her mother, Kitty the Cat.

"Mama Kitty, I just don't like all this brown mud messing up the place. I like to be all white. Although I know it makes a lot of good to have the rain falling, and indeed we couldn't survive without it, it's hard for me. I just don't like to get wet, so I certainly don't like to get dirty."

"Now, now dear. It won't be like this always, you know. Some days have different struggles, and other days have new ones. Cheer up. At least you still have a roof over your head. I have to spend much of my time out of doors. You should be very glad that you have as much as you do. Just think, I have a whole floor of mud to walk on most of the time, you just have a bit of mud on the house floor. Try to look at the good, the bigger good, than just the small things that aren't pleasant for you," Mama Kitty tried to encourage Furry.

"You're right, Mama Kitty. I'll try to notice the good things, rather than fuss about what I don't like," Furry responded, determined to try. Because there was one thing worse than having something bothersome, and that was behaving bothersome because of it, for that troubled everyone around as well.

"It's better to be cheerful about the little things you don't like, than to make a big deal about it, complaining, and then you start to become the problem that others have to fix," Mama Kitty had told her before.

Mama Kitty meowed and got the attention of Mrs. Dweller, who brought a nice bowl of milk for the two cats to share. Then Furry was tucked into her little bed of straw and cloth, for a rest, while Mama Kitty went back outside, tending to her duty around the barn.

She followed Mrs. Dweller back out of the house as she went to milk the next nanny goat.

Kitty the Cat had two good reasons for going with her at that time.

"Firstly," she thought, "I maybe be right on time to catch some rascal creepers who like to steal the grains out there. And secondly, I can help with any extra milk that might be there. I'm sure there will be enough for me to have a little extra snack. Mmm."

She was already looking forward to it.

But before she could get as far as the barn, Mr. Dweller was coming out of it with a basket of eggs and a very concerned look on his face.

As Mr. and Mrs. Dweller chatted, all Kitty the Cat heard was:

"Sumtinzbintaykinsumaygz—andachikkenzgonmissn" (Something's been taking some eggs, and a chicken's gone missing.)

Kitty the Cat wondered what she needed to be concerned about. For a moment the two humans talked together about some problem, and before too long Rusty was called for.

Now Rusty and Kitty the Cat felt very needed. There was something important for them to do. Just what exactly they weren't sure, but they knew they'd find out soon enough.

Chapter 9—Fences and Foxes

Together, rather soberly, Rusty and Kitty the Cat both followed Mrs. Dweller into the barn. She picked up a shovel too, and seemed to walk more cautiously.

“Bark! Bark! Bark!” started Rusty. He was the first to sense danger.

Kitty the Cat immediately leapt up on a high beam above the chicken's coop to get a good look, yet away from danger.

She spotted what they all had suspected. A very large snake began moving out from under a small pile of straw.

“Hey, where'd all the eggs go? I was as hoping for thirds on my meal...” the snake thought as it hissed its way and slowly slithered.

The chickens went into a clucking panic.

All at once, with precision, down went the shovel, and down leapt Kitty with well planned pounce, and off went Rusty to cart off the intruder he grabbed with his strong teeth. He seemed to call, in his own way, for those of the winged type who would take the job from there. They'd clean it up, leaving little to be remembered. The ants and other bugs would finish off whatever the crows did not.

Kitty the Cat climbed on to the hay and settled down comfortably, to show the chickens that all was now safe. Even a few sparrows fluttered in and landed on the floor of the barn to nibble some of the seeds sprinkled for the chickens. This was a clear sign that all was at peace, and pecking could now safely resume.

It wasn't too long before the chickens were at their pecking task, both in the barn, as well as around the vegetable garden. They were great for helping to remove the critters that tried to munch the food growing before it could be harvested. They played a great role in keeping this farm going.

Meanwhile, Rusty, who, although he knew the snake was a danger and a suspect for the missing eggs, still knew something else wasn't quite right. His nose told him so. He began sniffing all around, and around, trying to pick up a scent.

“What'cha smelling now?” said Kitty the Cat to Rusty, while on her way out.

“Hmmm. I counted and, if I am right, there is one less chicken than there ought to be,” replied Rusty.

“You just might be right. But I'll have a look around. They tend to go in funny places at times,” Kitty said, and was soon off climbing and searching all over the barn and garden area, and up in the hay loft above.

“Can’t find it anywhere,” Kitty said to Rusty, who was very alarmed. If what he suspected was the case, there was still a big job to do—one that would take daily vigilance. And he would most likely be the one called on to do the task.

Sombrely he walked away slowly over to the house.

Friendly the Puppy was there, as chipper as ever, and ready for a game of rough and tumble, in a playful dog sort of way.

Friendly was on the fenced in porch, pushing the rag ball, and very glad to see that Rusty was approaching. He was too eager to play that he didn’t notice how very pensive Rusty was.

“Come on and play! Come on and play, please!” he was yapping to Rusty.

Slowly, yet with a smile slowly starting to return to his face, he agreed to a time of play. Of course, there was work to be done and problems to solve, but time for play was important too, especially time taken with the young ones. Play was in some ways their work, for they learned much that way.

They rumbled and tumbled, play growled, and moved the ball around, grabbing it and then finally ending in a heap of fur in the dog bed at the end of the porch.

Rusty was glad that there was fun as well as work that he was needed for. Both helped to make his day a good one.

“Well,” Rusty said to Friendly the Puppy. “If you’d like to rest a bit here in my bed, that’s fine. You can even have some of my water there if you like. But I think I’m going to go and see what Mr. Dweller is up to. I see him starting on a project with his boys. I’ll see what I can do to help.”

So he said a temporary good-bye and made his way over to where the chickens, the farmer, and the boys were.

They were discussing the need.

Mr. Dweller told his sons, “It seems there’s a fox, or more than one, perhaps, that has found our happy chicken’s abode. The best we can do about it for now is to build a better fenced in area. And...”

Then as if on cue, that is when Rusty walked up, just in time to hear Mr. Dweller say what he said next:

“And, yes, you, Rusty, can be stationed here some of the time, to be the guard. You won’t let any foxes get nearby our chickens, will you?”

“No, sir I won’t!” Rusty barked out in his own way.

“Good then,” Mr. Dweller continued. “So let’s get on with the fence building, shall we?”

And on they worked, until they were sure it was as safe as they could make it, for the time being, with the materials that they had on hand.

Chapter 10—Friendly the Puppy

When Rusty got back to see Friendly the Puppy, he told him the whole story of what was the latest news around the farm.

Furry the Kitten heard some dog talk going on, and being able to make out, for the most part what was being said, she climbed out through the pet door and sat on the mat to listen.

Friendly Puppy, for that was what he was, walked over to say hello and to welcome her to the conversation.

Soon Kitty the Cat showed up as well, and shared the mat. The four of them had time to speak of the news.

Rusty began telling the young ones about the excitement in the barn, the missing eggs, and how that was dealt with. Kitty the Cat added in her parts of the story too.

"I'm so glad you are safe, Mama Kitty," said Furry.

"Me too. But more than just being safe, myself, it's my job to also look after others, and sometimes that means doing things that don't seem so safe. But then in the end we can all be happy. It's not always easy being older and bigger. It means more work, and sometimes doing things that aren't that pleasant. But that is what real growing up is all about," Mama Kitty said.

Furry nodded. She hoped that she too would be as brave as her Mama, if she too had a kitten and a home to protect.

Friendly thought it was all rather fun—not fully realising the danger or the hard work involved.

"Just think! I could go anywhere on the property. I could chase the chickens and have a bit of fun. Then I could explore the woods and see all I wish to see, and..." his thoughts, silly and unwise ones in deed, would have gone on, if they weren't stopped by what Rusty said next.

He really respected old Rusty, and knew that it was important to learn all he could. He noticed that even though Rusty did have the opportunity to go and run anywhere, and visit any of the animals, he didn't use that chance to just do whatever funny thing a dog might think up. He tried to use his freedom to be a help to the farmer, and to always be within hearing of the whistle or a calling out of his name. He was primarily to be a help, not just to live life trying to have only fun. And that is what the farmers liked about him. They knew he was loyal.

Whereas Friendly, though a fun little puppy, still had a lot to learn before he could be trusted with more freedom, because there were real dangers around, and he wouldn't want to be part of a new problem either, by doing some silly thing.

Rusty began to tell about the foxes that were starting to come.

"They are a big danger right now," he said soberly. "They take chickens, eggs, eat our food, and well, let's just say, they might not been too friendly with you, either, young pup."

"But I can bark!" Friendly said, and then demonstrated it as loudly as he could, with all his might.

Rusty smiled a bit at his big and brave efforts.

"What a great bark that is indeed. And I'm glad you have that. It will come in need one day for sure. For example if something tries to come near to hurt little Furry, when you and her are alone in the house, that

is good time to warn the farmers of the trouble. But, you know, just a bark won't chase a fox a way... or a bear either; you'll need to grow a bit bigger too. As big as your bark is, a big body is needed too. So do your best to sleep well, eat good food, and work on being a faithful dog, one that obeys when the humans ask you to do something. That's what it will take to grow in body, and grow to be dependable. Okay?"

Friendly smiled. He was glad that one day he would be able to do the work of a bigger dog.

But just as he was snuggling down to sleep, suddenly his eyes popped open, real bright and big.

"Bears?!" he all of a sudden recalled what Rusty had said. "Are there bears around here too?"

"I wouldn't be surprised if there was," Rusty replied. "But you won't have a thing to worry about—that is if you obey the farmers, and stay put in this part of the property. Running off deep into the woods, though it might seem like a whole lot of fun, will be pretty short lived if you met with a big bear or some other large prowling creature, don't you think?"

Friendly wanted to sleep, but the thought of bears and foxes as well was making him feel a bit uneasy. There was too much to think about.

He walked over to Furry, who also was ready to get up. The two of them went back inside the house and sat on the mat by the fireplace. They had big thoughts to think about, and big things to discuss. But perhaps they would do it after a nap. For some reason they did feel more safe inside the house. Soon sleep overcame their eyes and they drifted off into a peaceful nap, dreaming of running through vast fields.

Dreaming was a safe way to live out wishes and dreams, at least until they were bigger and could do so responsibly.

Chapter 11—Mr. and Mrs. Dweller

Kitty the Cat soon went out to find Mrs. Dweller, who was fixing a lunch outside for her boys. They were sitting there reading while they waited. She took turns going to one and then the other, and got plenty of pats that way. When she was done that, she spent time walking between the legs, especially the ones belonging to Mrs. Dweller, while she walked here and there, getting things ready. She liked the feeling of brushing up against her leg, even though Mrs. Dweller wasn't too keen on it, and kept thinking she was about to trip.

Finally, Kitty got the point that it would be safer, when Mrs. Dweller was cooking, to give her some space to work. Because if Mrs. Dweller did take a tumble, Kitty herself would get the brunt of the fall. Even though she thought she was a bigger and wiser cat than she used to be, she still had things to learn also, and had to keep reminding herself to make things easy for others, and not just do what felt fun or nice at the time.

"Lunch is ready," Mrs. Dwell called to the boys, then rang the bell for Mr. Dweller to hear. He was glad to hear it indeed, and was soon over to wash his hands along with the boys and settle down for a meal.

Of course the bell was also music to the ears of a certain loyal pet, and before too long Rusty was seated right near the table. He was on watch duty—to watch in case any food were to fall to the ground.

Mrs. Dweller saw these eager and faithful pets, and had prepared something special for them as well.

“Over here!” she called, and gave them each a dish of food, slightly away from the table. It was cleaner that way. She didn’t like flies and whatnots that especially outdoor pets carried around, to be anywhere near their own food.

Mr. Dweller folded his hands and gave a prayer of thanks for the meal, and for the work that was done that day. And all joined in the prayer of thanks. Rusty and Kitty the Cat showed their thanks, rather than speaking of it, by the eager way they got going on their food portions, but of course added a bark and meow as an extra token of appreciation.

After the meal Rusty was taken by Barol, the older boy, to guard the chickens’ area. Barol was also to feed them. Kitty helped to teach Furry a few new tricks and cleaning tips. Friendly played a game of stick catching with young Shane who needed a friend and some exercise, while Mr. and Mrs. Dweller took a ride on the horses around the property. This was a way to relax, keep their friendship and training going with the horses, and also have at private time to talk. It was important to have this time.

After about an hour it was time to come back and tend to the other needs of the farm.

While Furry was sleeping happily, perched on the top of the farmer’s bed, “Boom!” a loud clap of thunder suddenly woke her, and she leapt down.

“Boom!” a second one came, followed by a new flash of lightning.

Mrs. Dweller woke up and got out of the covers. She went to stoke up the fire, and get a coat down from a storage area.

“Where are you going, dear?” Mr. Dweller spoke, just as she opened the door to head out into the near darkness.

“I thought I heard some disturbance coming from the stable. The horses might be frightened. I’ll check to see how they are doing,” she replied.

“Good idea,” he said, rolling over to sleep again. Just then a thought struck him awake.

“The sheep!” he’d forgotten that their pen had a leak in the roof, that he was planning to fix the next day. If rain was falling, they were getting wet. He too would need to climb out of that warm and dry bed to ensure his animals were alright.

On went his coat, and out he went.

Friendly Puppy perked up. He remembered what Rusty had said about how to practice being responsible and grown up. Furry the kitten was indeed rather disturbed by the storm, and Friendly the puppy knew it was his job to look out for her and to guard this house, now that the farmers had both left.

With the fire going well now, thanks to the log Mrs. Dweller had placed there, the mat beside it was a very inviting place to be.

“Drip, drip, drip,” came a sound. Perhaps the house wasn’t as dry as it seemed, and perhaps there was work even for him to do on this dark and stormy night.

“Come over here, Furry,” he said in his most friendly voice, that came naturally for Friendly.

Together they sat on the mat beside the fire. When Friendly saw that Furry had stopped trembling and was relaxed, Friendly the Puppy got up for a moment.

“Something must be done about the leak,” Friendly thought. Though there wasn’t really much he could do, he did remember something he had seen Mrs. Dweller do. A pile of rags in the corner of the room, used for all sorts of purposes might be a help right now. She had often used one of them when the floor was too wet.

So Friendly, using a clever mind, grabbed a rag or two in his mouth and placed them on the puddle that was forming. He then returned to keep Furry company.

They were too relaxed—that is between the claps of thunder—to notice a few others that were enjoying a shelter from the storm.

Chapter 12—Barol and Shane

When morning light started, and the farmers had come back, a new little sound greeted them. Mrs. Dweller was in a set of clean warm clothes, had washed her hands and face, and was climbing back into bed. Mr. Dweller was cooking a warm pot of soup, and the boys were getting up and ready for the day.

They all heard it, but didn’t realise right away what it was.

Then it came again, “Tweet, cheep! Tweedlie!”

A bird! Right there in the corner of their house, on a beam of wood. It was, of course, out of the reach of any crawling, climbing, pouncing, and perhaps a bit furry creatures. But there it sat, warm and dry.

Mrs. Dweller didn’t mind having new company. The bird’s morning song was rather enjoyable. Since she needed some rest, and wouldn’t hear the songs of the birds while outside today, the song was on the inside.

The little bird could go out if it wished to, as there was a small gap on that side between the roof and the walls. But for some reason it preferred to nestled down there for a bit.

“Here darling,” Mr. Dweller said, bringing over a bowl of warm soup to his wife who was sitting up in bed.

“Oh, thank you,” she replied. I’ll feel much better soon. That was quite a night.”

In came the boys to sit at the table near the fireplace. There they would eat with their father. But before doing so, they made sure to fill Furry and Friendly’s dishes with some food and milk—fresh milk that their mother had just brought in. After they washed their hands, they sat to say a prayer of thanksgiving, and enjoyed the meal served up.

“How did the chicken’s do last night?” the boys asked their father, after he had finished reading the passage for the day from the family’s Bible.

“Well, I counted the same as there was last night; and Rusty stayed their all night too. I think they are alright,” Mr. Dweller replied.

As soon as breakfast was over, the boys were up to help around the farm. Shane would help to collect eggs, feed the chickens, Rusty and Kitty the Cat. Barol would help his father to clean out the horse stalls, and lead the sheep out to the grassy area. Mrs. Dweller had already milked the cows and goats while she was out there in the stormy early morning.

When she rose she would take care of the milk, preserving it, or making butter and cheese and yogurt, and all the things that must be done to provide for her family. Later, the boys would help their mother in the garden, and help to prepare the meal for the evening with the all the fresh produce.

It was starting to get easier, as they all worked to get their little farm going. More food was growing, less bugs and weeds were taking them, more food was being preserved for the winter months, and the animals seemed to have what they needed.

When the dinner bell rang in the humble house, Mr. Dweller came back from fixing up the sheep’s pen. It could withstand the rain better now. It was hard work keeping up with all the needs, but he was glad to be here, even though it was a bit rough and wild.

Adventures of Furry and Friendly

(9/9/2020)

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Chapter 2—Frizz bee

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Part 2

Chapter 1—Climbing Trees

Furry was scratching in the soil near the house, it was where she did her 'business'. She was a clean kitten and liked to take good care of herself. It made her feel real big to use the outdoors when she needed to. She still stayed very close to the house, and was inside most of the time, but these trips when 'nature called' showed her she was getting bigger.

"Maybe I can learn to climb a tree one day!" she thought. "It could be quite exciting!" Furry the Kitten was getting all kinds of fun ideas. Going outside every now and then made ideas spring up like flowers do in the spring.

As she was imagining how cool it would be to be looking down at Friendly from up above on a tree branch, "plop!" suddenly something hit her head, rather gently though.

"What was that?" she wondered and looked up.

"Oh, sorry. It was just me. I think I accidentally knocked an acorn down while climbing." It was Kitty the Cat who was up in the tree, doing just what she had been thinking about.

Furry the kitten took a mental note. "If I climb trees I'll need to be aware that I don't knock things down on those below."

Then she said:

“How did you get up there?”

Kitty climbed down one branch that led to a spot in the tree where she could then climb onto a lower branch, and so on, and eventually could leap down from not too high a place on to the ground.

“Hi!” she said. “I was just taking a look at things, checking out the roof of the house and such. Gotta keep an eye on what’s happening.

Furry asked, “Can you please teach me how to get up there?”

Kitty replied: “It’s not as easy as you think. Many a fun loving cat has gotten stuck up in the tree. It’s easier going up than coming down. I think you best grow some longer legs and practice your landing. It’s a challenge you’ll need to be ready for.”

“Oh, I see,” Furry nodded. “I guess I’ll wait until I get a bit older.”

Kitty the Cat explained another thing:

“The birds don’t take a liking to me coming around however, so I try to stay away if they are in the tree—especially during nesting time. It’s only considerate to do so.”

“Are they scared of you, Mama?” Furry asked.

“Well, let’s just say they have sense that with creatures of my sort, it’s best they and we stay apart. Some of our type have bothered a good many bird. So if I do get too close, they let me know, usually with their wings and beaks that it’s time I move on,” Kitty the Cat explained.

“Oh,” said Furry, realising that there was more to climbing trees than just having fun. Some things that seem fun while watching others doing them, actually have quite a bit of challenge involved, as well as danger.

Together they walked over to the wooden bench beside the door to the house.

“Let’s climb up here and I’ll tell you some adventures from my life,” Kitty the Cat said.

“Yippee!” said little Furry, for she loved stories. Maybe she couldn’t run free everywhere, and maybe it was best she didn’t climb tall trees yet, but stories and snuggles was something she could enjoy any day, at any age.

Kitty the Cat began:

“When our masters first got me, I was real young. We used to live down the mountain, far away from here, right near a river. This river had a stream that led into it. I liked exploring around. But I didn’t always make it safely back home at night.

“One night I was stuck up in a tree, and it was dark and cold, and there were all sorts of sounds coming from the wooded area. The next morning our master took Rusty, the trusty dog, out with him to find me. I could hear them coming and was very relieved. I was so tired and hungry too, that I couldn’t meow so loud. But when they got closer to the tree that I was in, I saw Rusty’s ears perk up. I knew he had heard me.

Again I tried with all my might to make as much of a sound as I could. This was promptly followed by a bark.

'What is it Rusty' our master asked. 'Do you know where Kitty might be? Show me!'

Rusty kept barking and walking until he was directly under the branch that I was on."

As Furry listened to the story, the very Rusty came and joined them, lying on the wooden porch just under the bench.

"Good for you Rusty, you rescued my Mama!" purred Furry.

Rusty just yawned, smiled a bit, and then settled for some rest. He had been up a good part of the night. The foxes had given him a bit of trouble. They never did get in and get the chickens. Rusty protected them the best he could, but now he did need a rest.

"Did the foxes keep you up again?" Kitty asked before Rusty was fully asleep.

He nodded briefly, and soon was catching up on what he'd missed in the night.

Chapter 2—Frizz bee

"Tell me more, please tell me more," Furry asked Mama Kitty. "How did you get down from the tree? Did you have to leap down a long way? Did you get hurt?"

"So many questions. Well, as you can see I did make it, and was safe enough too. I made my way, just like you saw me do today, to the lowest branch. Then our master was able to reach high up and lift me out. He carried the cold and scared little me back to the house. Rusty wagged his tail and was so pleased that he had done that important job of helping our master to find me. He felt like a real helpful dog now, who was getting bigger and more depended on by the day. He was still rather young, but this made him feel rather important. Isn't that right, Rusty?"

To this, he just nodded sleepily and carried on resting.

"See, he wasn't doing it to be noticed, just like his work in the night while guarding the chickens. He just does what his master needs his help doing. Not everything can be done with machines, you know. Sometimes a good and wise, intuitive animal can be heaps better. Our farmer knows that. Why a machine can't lay an egg! Nor grow wool, nor do a good many things that we farm creatures and home pets can help do."

Just then, a couple of ducks flew in and landed in a big puddle of water. This was the puddle that the natural spring flowed into. It was hooked up to a pipe that led to the veggie garden on the side of the house, that lay lower than the spring, and was pulled by gravity to water the garden, and the orchard trees. This water was also pumped by a hand pump to fill buckets to be used around the farm, and in the house.

"Do ducks help with something here?" Furry asked.

"Hello! Nice to see you," Kitty greeted Mallard the duck.

"Well, there's something in the vegetable garden that likes to eat the farmer's food. But it just so happens that ducks love to find those slimy garden munchers and take them away. Do you know what it is?" Kitty the Cat posed the question.

Furry shook her head. She didn't know much about the outdoors. But this is how she would learn.

Mama Kitty then said the answer: "Slugs!" she continued telling of how the garden was managed.

"There is another creature, somewhat similar, but all rolled up in a roll it looks like, and covered with a shell, it's called a snail. Sometimes Mr. Dweller takes some of the chickens from the coop and brings them up here to clean up the garden. They really like to find those garden munching bugs, and others as well. And their droppings have an amazing way of making the soil richer in nutrients. So birds are often the biggest helper to plants."

"But how do they help plants?" Furry asked.

Kitty the Cat replied, "Well, not only do they help by removing the type of bugs that could be harmful to the farmers edible plants, but they do help in spreading seeds of new plants in all kinds of places. The flying type of the winged creatures, who have claw type of feet and can sit in the branches of trees and in bushes, like to pick berries and seeds. Sometimes they drop bits of what they ate, and a new plant will grow from that seed."

By this time Rusty was starting to stir. He'd heard his master calling and had perked up. In his hand the farmer held a frizz bee and was calling.

This was not a time to be missed.

"When the master has time for fun, Rusty has strength to run!" was a motto Kitty spoke as Rusty dashed off to catch the flying frizz bee. The farmer depended on the great help of his trust worthy dog, and tried to reward him with a good bit of fun whenever he found the time. Many days were too busy, but usually at least once a day, he'd have a time of play with his faithful pet.

With the dog now off the porch, and the cats in a restful state, the ducks waddled over the porch as they made their way on this much smoother pathway to the other side of the house. They were always curious what was going on around here, and they were good for bug removal and checking.

If you had been sitting there on the porch listening you might have only heard, "Quack, quack, quack, quack." But actually there was an important discussion going on.

"Did you check around the garden yet?" said one duck.

"Yes. Did that yesterday. And what about under the chairs by the outdoor table. Spiders and other crawlers like to make that their home," the second duck returned the question.

"Nope, but since we are going in that direction, let's make sure we monitor that area. You know it's really nice that the farmers set up this mini duck pond for us here. How thoughtful. Maybe they use it too, but personally I think it's great and plan to put it to good use when we come here for our daily inspection."

And so they waddled off, looking here and there and just generally cleaning things up a bit—as in, bird style.

Chapter 3—Chicks and Eggs

Friendly was wide awake now, having heard the quacking. He popped his head out of the pet door of the house and saw their tails at the other end, nearly all the way off. He leapt out and gave them an extra incentive to move on off of “his” porch. With a yap and a bit of a run he got them making a speedy exit towards the other side where the outdoor table was.

Rusty arrived on the scene.

“So you like chasing the ducks, do you?” Rusty said in a somewhat non complimentary way.

Friendly replied, “Well, maybe they’ll get hurt by the rag ball I hope someone will throw to me...”

“I see...” came the reply. “I hope you can learn to appreciate them too. Though they are very different than you, and probably aren’t well acquainted with balls and such other essential items in the life of a dog, we can still be glad for whatever it is that the farmer needs them for. Remember, just because we might not see the reason why a new animal or piece of equipment is bought and brought to the farm, it doesn’t mean it doesn’t have a very good reason for being here.

“Come, I’ll tell you a story,” Rusty said. He was ready to rest now, after all his playful running round catching frizz bees and such.

Together they sat on the far end of the porch, right where the ducks were seen quacking and bug picking.

Friendly liked to hear whatever story was to be told. Somehow he knew it would help him to grow up faster—at least to be wiser, which was a big part of growing up.

“When I was young, the farmer got a whole lot of little yellow baby chicks. They were to be chickens one day. He kept them warm and fed them things to nibble on. They grew bigger and fatter and more fluffy with feathers. These were to be laying chickens for where we used to live.

“But before they grew up, when they were still small and couldn’t make more than little peep peep noises, I started to wonder if the farmer had really made the right purchase for the farm. I looked around and saw all the equipment for harvesting, and for ploughing and planting. I could see good use for that. And well, he had bought me too, and that was an extremely wise purchase of course...” Rusty laughed a bit at his joke.

“Anyway, I looked at the sheep and the wool they could produce, the goats and cows and the buckets of milk they gave each day, but when I looked at these little tiny peeping things, I could see no benefit. They were just eating food and taking the farmer some time. But he was much wiser than I. He had vision for the future. He knew what they were going to become, and the help they could be one day, if he was patient. If he got these chickens when they were young, then he could ensure they got all the right kinds of nutrition and care to make them healthy.

“But I didn’t see that at the time, so I thought I’d save us all time and try to set them free from their cage. I thought they should just run free and find themselves their own food. I was pretty selfish and thought way too highly of myself. I forgot that once I was a very young and untrained dog that caused the farmer a whole lot of trouble at first—many messes to clean, and chewed up shoes. But I forgot all that.

“So, anyway, when I tried to let them free, his wife came in just then to check on their water and to see if they were warm enough. Since they didn’t have a mama hen to keep them warm, they needed another way to feel snug, especially at night. I was whining and pawing at the cage.

“She seemed to understand that I didn’t understand what these little ones, and so many of them, were doing. She sat down and showed me something from a basket she held. It was an egg.

“See this egg? Maybe sometime you’ll even like to have one for supper. Well, one day we’ll have lots of these. And we need them. But if we don’t have patience to wait and care for these chickens when they are young, we’ll never reach the goal. We cared for you too, when you were young, you know?” Mrs. Dweller explained.

“Somehow I understood, at least I thought I did. I knew she was saying, in her own way, that she loved me too and cared for me, and also needed to care for other creatures.

“I decided then, that just because I didn’t understand everything that my master was doing, or the young ones he brought to the farm, young ones I was to help protect also, still I would trust that he knew what was best and just who and what was needed. He wouldn’t do things that really were a waste of time and food and hard work. He had a plan and would do what was best. I just needed to do my small, and humble job, and let the farmer make the decisions that were for him only to make.”

Rusty finished telling this story of a very important lesson he learned that day some years ago. Friendly Puppy liked hearing about things that happened in this older and wiser dog’s life. And then, all of a sudden he realised how important it was that Rusty learned that lesson, to care for the young ones, even if they can’t do much yet to help on the farm. It was important to him, because he was just that, right now, a young one that was still in the growing and learning part of life. And because Rusty had learned that lesson, now Rusty could be nice and caring to Friendly, a little puppy. Perhaps that is why Friendly was so friendly, as he’d learned it from the older ones around him who had learned to be that way.

Chapter 4—Bears in the Forest

There was some stirring in the woods, however, as the farmer’s presence was made more known to all the animal life in that part of the woods. The animals weren’t quite sure what to make of it. They hoped both they and the farmer’s family could live in peace, without troubling each other. Now, for some animals it was easy, and they found it rather beneficial to have these humans around.

Take the racoons for example. Any scraps and trash in a can meant fast and easy snacks. However, these weren’t particularly appreciated by Mr. and Mrs. Dweller, but it was just something that came with living near the wooded area.

Also, the birds were glad for the new supply of seeds, some of which were meant to grow in the ground. They made it easy for the little flying creatures to have fast food for dinner. But all in all, either side, animal or human side, weren’t too troubled by each other. That is until a new family of bears decided to move in for a while.

The birds tried to warn them, but they wouldn’t listen. They thought they owned the forest, or should. After all, weren’t they the biggest and strongest creatures around? They ought to be able to come and go wherever and whenever they pleased.

But this wasn't really appreciated. Over time, the creatures helped those bears to see that the forest was meant to be shared and that everyone needed their space to live. And over time the bears explained what had happened that made them feel grumpy to begin with.

"I had been living, happily, I thought, with my family down by a nice river. That is until it flooded in the rainy time. I guess I had chosen a cave a bit too close to the river's edge, and the water came in and we were homeless for quite some time.

"We travelled around looking for a place. But when we at last found one place, we'd discover another family of animals was already living there. And so on we went. It's not easy for a bear, who loves his sleep, to lose his living place and feel rather lost," the Papa bear expressed.

This helped the other animals to understand him more.

"But I'm sure it's not still flooded now..." said a bird. "We don't mind you being here, but wouldn't you rather be back where you use to be living happily?"

"Well, I suppose I could, but I don't trust that river any more. If it's ruined things once, who knows what will happen next!" he explained.

The animals nodded.

Then a little squirrel came up and told the cubs a story, about a different bear cub that used to live nearby there. "His name was Beary Little Cub, and he lived here for a long while with his family. They too had to move and find a new place to live."

This caught the Papa bear's attention, and the Mama bear asked,

"Why did they move away?"

A bird who was always very attentive to what the other animals were doing, feeling, and talking about, knew the whole story. She said,

"It's because of this new farm nearby. They wanted to not trouble the humans, and not have the humans trouble them. I guess they didn't want to wait until they were driven away, but rather do a kind deed and leave space for others."

It was a new thought. This family of bears rarely had thought of it.

"Hmmm," the papa bear thought. "Maybe that is what made things tough for me, for us, we wait too long. We wait until folks don't want us around, rather than giving space, if space is needed. We've thought all along that others need to make room for us, rather than ever wishing to make room for others. We'll have to talk about it as family, but perhaps there is a better place we can go. Maybe it just takes a bit of searching."

"Yes," added in a racoon that woke to join in the discussion. "I heard there is a place on the other side of the river, between the river and large rocks. It hasn't been lived in for years. Folks that used to be there—bear folks that is—moved to another place also. I don't see why you couldn't give it a try. You'd have to cross the river first, but that's no problem for you, is it? Big as you are."

With that, the raccoon returned to his hollow log and fell fast asleep again. He wanted to make sure he was never noticed during the day. He had food to find at night, after all.

And so it was that this bear family took the step to move to a new place, not because they were chased away, but because they wanted to give others space.

Chapter 5—A Little Child in Her Arms

One day while Mr. Dweller and his boys, along with Rusty, were walking back home from fishing up the river, they spotted something that caused them to freeze. But then Rusty burst out with a loud bark. They saw this family of bears as they were on their way out of the river, and climbing up the hill to find their new home.

When they were out of sight, Mr. Dweller said, “I thought I’ve been hearing some growling in the woods near our property. I didn’t want to make anyone feel unnecessarily worried. But now we know.”

One of the boys said, “I think I saw a bear one day when we were getting firewood. I didn’t see it so good, but it looked like a group of birds were chasing it away from us. I was glad for that. I thought it was a raccoon, but now that I’ve seen them, I think it was the baby bear.”

The younger boy said, “And I’m glad that I didn’t see it. I don’t think I would have liked to. I hope they are moving away.”

Rusty added his consent to the idea of them moving away. He had enough to keep him busy with foxes and raccoons, and even keeping Friendly Puppy learning what he should and not wandering away.

He would have a good story to tell to Kitty the Cat, Friendly the Puppy, as well as Furry the kitten, when they had their chat time today. He was eager to do so as they reached the door of their happy abode.

However, before he could tell his friends about the fishing adventure that ended with seeing the team of bears, the home team had a story of their own to tell. It was almost more interesting than what had happened to him. In quietness he listened.

Kitty the Cat started out, “I was prowling around the property, like I usually do. I was on extra alert since you, Rusty, were gone. I couldn’t bark, but I was sure there was something I could do. For awhile everything was going very smoothly, hardly a leaf fluttering, until I heard Mrs. Dweller calling out to the horses to come quickly to where she stood at the gate of the paddock.”

Rusty was eagerly listening. What could have happened while both he and the man and the boys were gone?

Furry the kitten added, “I saw them too, both Friendly and I did. We were on the porch and could see right down to the paddock.”

“Well, what happened then?” Rusty was eager to find out, and so the story of the day continued.

Kitty the Cat said: “It wasn’t long before Mrs. Dweller was up on a horse, riding bare back of course, as she is so good at, and off she went. Off into the woods she disappeared, going where, I didn’t know. Whatever

could have happened, was rather abrupt. Or perhaps what needed to happen, had to be done rather promptly.”

Furry the Kitten continued the next part, as she was in the house and could observe the next part of the event.

“I was rather disturbed too, with everyone gone, nearly, but just us animals. What were we to do if anything went wrong? Just then, in came Mrs. Dweller, carrying a little child in her arms.”

“A child! Whose child? Where are they now?” Rusty asked, most alerted. He knew the woods were no place for a child to wonder alone.

Friendly Puppy, who was the first of the animal dwellers to greet this little child, spoke up.

“She belongs to a travelling team of campers, I found out, by the smell of the child. A mixture of the smell of their family, as well as a campfire, and food that is cooked on a fire. I tried to be real friendly of course, as anyone would do when helping a lost child, or lost sheep, or anyone.”

Furry the Kitten added, “She is asleep now, in Mrs. Dweller’s arms.”

“Oh,” added Rusty, putting some things together. “That must be why Mr. Dweller left on his horse so soon after we got back. He must be out looking for the child’s family. I could be a help I’m sure. If I could just smell the little one, then I could pick up the scent of the rest of them in the woods.”

It was a good idea, and just as he thought that, the same idea came to Mr. Dweller, who had come back to get him.

“Rusty, come with me! And Barol, please put the horse in the barn, and keep watch over the animals. Shane, be on hand if Mama needs you, okay? Thanks boys. Come on Rusty.”

Each one agreed and would help in any way they could. Rusty then first entered the house, a very rare event, and silently sniffed the child, and then followed Mr. Dweller out to begin the search.

Furry the Kitten said, “Mama what can I do to help?”

Kitty the Cat answered, “If we are real quiet, that might be the biggest help now. For we don’t want the little one to wake, or Mrs. Dweller need to do anything else. We won’t disturb her or the child. Perhaps we should rest out here for now.”

Furry didn’t mind. She’d be beside her mother anyway, and would be looked after.

Chapter 6—By the Cosy Fire

Shane poured some milk into a bowl for them, and then brought his mother a glass of water, every so silently. He also added a log to the fire, and then sat nearby to read and be on hand should there be a need.

It was a good while later before a very tired and hungry Mr. Dweller and a certain Rusty came back.

When they entered the home, a little child was sitting at the table, being read a story by Shane, and Mrs. Dweller was saying “Would you like some more warm milk with honey?”

Furry the Kitten certainly wished that was being asked of her, and was about to reply with a big meow “yes”, but a look from her mother helped her to keep to herself. They had both come into the house to be beside the fire and to be on hand if there was a need, not to start eating the human’s snacks.

Mrs. Dweller was able to have Shane bring his brother Barol some food too, along with a jug of water, a book and a blanket. They both felt rather grown up today. Everyone was depended on for helping in times of need.

But Mr. Dweller wasn’t the only person who entered the house now. In walked a mother and father, the parents of the little one.

“Mama! Papa!” said the child, who started again to cry, for joy at seeing them and remembering the sorrow of being lost in the woods.

“Thank you so much, Mrs. Dweller, for rescuing my little one. Who know what would have happened if you hadn’t had such keen eyes and ears, and quickly went to bring her to safety.” The mother started to tear up, but felt very glad indeed that all was well now.

This couple was invited to sit down and enjoy some warm and fresh milk, freshly boiled after being milked that day. It was nice to have new company to chat with, though the circumstances had been rather unsettling to begin with.

“If you’d like to see around the farm, please stay. I’m sure we can find room for you to stay the night if you need to also.” Mrs. Dweller was so warm and accommodating, and this invitation was well appreciated. Of course it would take some creative thinking to come up with a place for them, but it was better than to have them get lost in the woods while trying to make their way through the night—and need to be rescued once again.

Mrs. Dweller had the idea of clearing a spot for them in the loft area. The stuff holding that place could be temporarily moved. “Stuff is just stuff, but people are people,” she would tell herself, while keeping things in perspective and keeping priorities in the right order.

Mr. Dweller had gone to take Rusty to the chicken’s place and bring Barol back for a time of company. They had a good chat as they walked, speaking about what had happened with the animals while he was gone. Thankfully, not much, but it was good to talk about it and get questions answered.

After a tour around the farm, the two families sat by the cosy fire, cosy indeed in that small living place. In commenting on the small living place, Mrs. Dweller said, “If we had a few more pairs of hands around, we could make the building extension we’ve been wanting too. But then again, extra helpers would fill it up too, ha!”

She didn’t always know what the solution would be to their many needs and with few people to help out. But perhaps it would be good if someone, sometime, would come to stay with them. But she never thought of it as a real possibility. Though today she began thinking it just might be, one day.

They sang songs and told stories about life there on the farm, and the challenges and adventures so far.

Seeing that space in the house was sparse, the teams of cats and dogs, who were there for a feeding, were out on the porch looking at the stars and having their own chats.

“Did you see that?” interrupted Kitty. “I thought I saw a mouse...”

“Rascal. But together we can keep the home safe,” added Rusty, “Right?”

Furry and Friendly, replied in chorus, “Right! Together we can.”

In the morning, after animal care duties, Mr. Dweller helped the couple and their child to ride out to join the rest of their team, who were waiting for whenever they would get back.

But the parents were having interesting thoughts. What if that couple chose to be the extra pairs of hands needed and helped out at the farm one of these day? It might just be what would be right, and what they’d enjoy. It was worth a think about it.

Chapter 7—Dwelling Place

A few weeks later there was an unexpected visit.

Mrs. Dweller had just put on the soup for supper, when she heard a knock.

“My, my! What a surprise. You both are most welcome,” she said to those at the door.

The couple had come back, with their child, and one other person—a certain Mr. Carpenter! It was a fun surprise indeed.

They were offering to help out at the farm for awhile, at least until a new room could be built, and most of the crops harvested.

They couldn’t have come at a better time indeed. As they related, the rest of their team would stay with Mabel and her family, while Mr. Carpenter was here giving his help in the building project.

Mrs. Dweller was so thrilled. But her first thought, as any good host would think was, “Do I have enough supper to share with them all?” But that wasn’t a worry anymore, as the team had brought with them a large container of fresh goods. They could supply their own humble meals, and just be there to lend their time and strength.

It was a good day indeed.

Furry and Friendly were a welcoming team as well, and made friends quickly as well. “More people means more pats—if we are friendly, that is,” they mused and whispered.

By the end of the week the house had two new rooms added on, and one big loft for storing of goods and supplies.

Furry and Friendly wasted no time at all exploring around. It was good to have more space to sleep, crawl, and play around. It was nice of these people to come and make them a bigger and better house to live in! – Well, them, and the people of course too.

At their final meal together, Mr. and Mrs. Dweller thanked them heartily. “You’ve all been such a help. I really don’t know how to thank you. I don’t know what we would have done without you.”

Furry who had come back in and was weaving her way among the legs was glad for the company, and didn’t really want them to leave.

Friendly was yapping like he wanted the little girl to stay, the little one, who had become a good friend. The child was always there to throw the ball for him, even when Shane and Barol were busy. She was a good friend to have around.

Mr. Carpenter was off on his horse and got a good fast start to head home. The others lingered a while more. They too didn’t really want to leave. It was starting to feel like home. A home they didn’t have. They were travelling around, visiting here and there, trying to decide just where to make a home.

“Perhaps our help would be needed a while more,” they thought.

Thinking that it was impolite to even suggest that they offer to stay on longer, they were about to say good-bye, when they heard their little girl laughing at a game with Friendly and Shane.

“If you’d like we could come back again sometime...” the woman started off saying, a bit shyly.

Being somewhat bolder, the man added, though somewhat hesitantly, “Or... we could just not leave, quite yet, if you like.”

It was a new thought, though a pleasant one. The Dwellers would think it over.

“Well, that is a pleasant idea,” Mrs. Dweller said. “Why don’t you at least stay one more night, and give us time to think it over. We can talk it over in the morning.”

Everyone agreed this was a good suggestion.

When morning came, the Dwellers couldn’t think of letting their friends go, without a place yet to stay, and when they clearly had a need for help. It seemed the perfect set up. At first they could stay in the house extension, then later, if they really did want to live here on a more long term basis, they could build themselves a house on the property.

This way they would have a place to stay for now, and all preparations could be made to make it through the coming cold winter—and spring crops would be off to a hearty start with their help as well.

If by summer, they all wished to continue living there, then work on another house would begin, and perhaps more visitors would come to help out with that, for a time.

Life was looking better and better, the Dwellers thought.

The boys were happy for a new young one to help look after and to share their toys and pets with, and the farm would surely benefit from a bigger team—especially a team that enjoyed working together.

Chapter 8—Snowy Times

The weather began to turn rather cold, but the family was plenty cosy now. With more of them tucked in the house together at night somehow it seemed to keep things just a bit warmer, so they didn't mind the tight living quarters.

There was an extra pair of arms to chop the wood, as Mr. Nightly, for that is what he was called, helped out with it as well. The women took turns cooking the meals, caring for and teaching the children, as well as helping with the animal's needs. There were wool blankets and scarves to make so all would be warm enough.

"How would I have ever made it without you here?" Mrs. Dweller said to Mrs. Nightly.

"I'm sure you would have gotten by in some way or another, but I don't know where I would have been able to stay so warm and living comfortably with my family. I'm forever thankful for you," Mrs. Nightly responded.

It was good to have others to work with.

The cold weather seemed to bring a few new friends their direction too. Since food was often on the front porch or nearby, for the pets and hungry birds, soon some other wood dwelling creatures ventured to help themselves, when food seemed scarce. Squirrels, a deer or two, birds of various types, and even a wild boar came once.

Friendly Puppy learned to keep his ears perked up, even when he was half asleep by the fireplace. He never knew when a new and curious creature was going to show up. As soon as he heard the slightest new sound, or smelled something new that was living, he'd poke his head out the pet door and take a look. If he was real quiet he could often observe them without chasing them away. Well, unless he happened to sneeze!

The snowy air and cold wind did make him sneeze once and a flock of birds peacefully nibbling crumb took off with a start. It always amazed him how birds could do that.

"I guess they need to be, as small and delicate as they are. I guess we all have a way to stay safe, as well as a way to look nice and cute or attractive, or something that makes us a help to the natural world around us," thought Friendly.

He would always tell Furry about any new animals he got to see. He was good at describing things as he had seen them. This was part of his learning, to observe and then remember, and then try to tell others. He remembered things better for longer when he had a chance to talk about them. He might not have had a very big job to do, but being a friend—for that was his name indeed—was his responsibility for now, and he was trying to do a great job of it.

“What’s for dinner?” Mr. Dweller asked, though he didn’t really need to. He already knew. For in these winter months there wasn’t a whole lot of variety. What they had been able to preserve and grow for long term storage, was what they had available to eat. It was usually potato and pumpkin soup with beans, pickled veggies and some bread dough cooked on sticks over the open fire, with a little oil and salt to dip it in. This was always a warm and satisfying way to end the day.

Usually some songs and stories were shared, thoughts and ideas, as well as a read of something inspirational. Then it was off to early bed under the warmest blankets they could make. The fire was kept burning well through the night, as they took turns keeping it going. Each of the rooms had a fire place, so everyone was kept good and warm.

Since the visiting family brought with them a large batch of grains, breakfast was often warm cooked cereal with preserved fruit, and fresh milk. Mid day meal was often rice and canned veggies and yogurt with nuts, or perhaps bean spread on bread instead, if they had time to make it.

While Mrs. Dweller was doing the washing of the dishes, in a pot of melted snow on the wood stove, she was feeling particularly glad for all that this new family had brought to them. Not only food supplies and company, but their friendship and stories were heart-warming. This made the winter pass by much more quickly than it would have if they were all alone.

Mr. Dweller would still take the horses out for their daily ride, but took turns with others. Sometimes Mr. Knightly came along with him, other times one of the women, or sometimes one of the boys—or both of them. He did this in the warmest part of the day. Not only was it good for the horses, but it helped him and the others get enough fresh air and exercise. This was needed for their health. They worked together to ensure the best health of each one on the team. They each would need to be in good working order when spring time came. There would be plenty to do, and they would need every bit of strength to do it.

Chapter 9--Shennela

Mrs. Knightly had bundled up her little girl good and warm, and Shane as well as Friendly Puppy on a leash, came along. The sun was starting to warm things up and it looked very beautiful outside. They took a walk a short distance a way and discovered all the various animal foot prints they could, and tried to identify each of them. Some were easy—such as bird prints, but others were harder to know. It was fun trying to guess just what had been walking around their place when they weren’t looking.

“Oh, look that’s a deer’s foot print!” Shane exclaimed.

“And I see a fox foot print over here!” Mrs. Knightly said.

Shennela, for that is the girls name, threw a handful of breadcrumbs that she brought with her, in case some birds were around. When she saw one in a leafless tree that is when she tossed out the treasured nibbles. Down the bird flew on to the ground where there was a patch nearly free of snow. It was fun to see how happy this little one was. Over came another to join in the delight and then another and another.

Oh my! Shennela didn’t know if those few crumbs would be enough. And she was surprised that there were other birds around that she didn’t notice, but who were obviously carefully watching what these

people were doing. They were happy for a little unexpected treat, and thanked the girl by then sitting in the tree and singing a happy song.

Perhaps the birds noticed that Friendly Puppy was on a leash and couldn't come and chase them away, and that is why they felt comfortable landing on the ground just then, and so close to the people. It was brave of them, but for a bit of food it was worth it.

"I'll bring more to you tomorrow," Shennela said, after her mother told her this would be a nice thing to do, and would save some crumbs for them.

As Friendly Puppy made his way, obediently back to the house, he had a treat too. Shane had made him a snowball and he happily caught it in his mouth, and then asked for it to be thrown again. Well, usually it would break after one throw-and-catch and a new one would need to be made. But there was enough snow for that.

When they got back to the warmth of fireplace, and Friendly was drying off, Furry the Kitten came to inspect him. Well, he wasn't muddy, but he was wet.

"I guess that's one good thing about lots of snow," she said, "if you know where to walk, though your feet and body get wet, there isn't a bunch of mud, like there will be soon, when the rest of the snow melts. And besides, one more thing that I like is the snow is as white as a cat!"

She had only seen two cats in her life, herself and her mother, so she thought that was the colour of all cats and kittens. Her mother later explained to her that it just so happened to be that way. "But," Kitty the Cat had said, "some cats and kittens are completely black; some are grey; some are even rather red; and some brown or light beige in colour; and some are a mix of all of these."

"Oh!" Furry took in the information. "I guess they can't hide in the snow very well then, if they wanted to."

"I guess that is one thing we can do," replied Kitty the Cat, with a smile, "We both can hide in snow. Speaking of it, do you want to go for a little walk nearby. We won't go far, but we could play a hide and seek game. Perhaps Rusty would like to join us. He's back now from the barn."

And so they did. Barol took Rusty for a little walk, and the cat and her kitten joined them. There were bushes to hide in and snow to roll in, snow balls to grab, made by Barol who has having fun making and throwing them to each of the pets. He'd even brought a coloured string to drag along in the snow, that the cats like to chase. Perhaps they hoped there was a big ball of yarn at the other end of it, a fun ball to play with. It wasn't there this time; probably because most of the yarn had all been used to make scarfs and mittens for children.

Chapter 10—Something Good

While others were having walks and caring for the pets, and dinner was being cooked, Mr. Knightly was taking a turn in the barn. He cleaned it, fed the animals, and did the last milking duties. There was plenty of hay that had been stored up in the summer and autumn, and he put new hay for the horses, goats, cows, and sheep to nibble on.

What was hard was making drinking water available for them, as sometimes the temperature in the barn could make the water freeze. Thankfully there was a wood stove that could be used to heat the barn when needed, and Mr. Knightly would melt snow in a pot there and pour it on the frozen water in the metal water dishes and troughs. This helped to keep the water in a liquid state when things got just too cold.

Mr. Dweller came to call him to supper, as it was now ready. It was to be a special meal. Though the weather was still cold, it actually was the first day of spring, and they were glad it was.

“Come on to the house. Something good is cooking for us. Bean and beet stew, with apple crumble and whipped cream!” Mr. Dweller announced, since he had just personally checked on it.

“I can’t tell you how thankful I am for your help, but I think that will only grow as we enter spring. That’s when we’re going to really feel the benefits of having you here,” Mr. Dweller said with heartfelt thanks.

“I’m just so grateful to your family. I haven’t enjoyed a winter more than this year,” Mr. Knightly replied sincerely.

Shennela danced and played her mother’s tambourine, while the boys used pots and lids, spoons and sticks to make the merriest music they could. It was a day to be remembered. They made it happily through the winter, and would soon see more days of sun and warmth, and yes, hard work too for the grown-ups. But that was going to be much better this year than any year before, for they had more help. It might even be fun, they thought as they heard the children singing cheerily a song about spring and new life and growth.

Even Friendly Puppy got with the mood of the festive night. He started barking in time—or what he thought was in time to the music. Everyone thought he was just happy, and they didn’t mind. Furry, well, she took the time to enjoy a warm bowl of milk and curl up to sleep, holding a precious item she had found after diligent search through the bags and crates of stuff—a whole ball of yarn. She knew there weren’t many if any of them left. So this was very special to her. This would keep her happily entertained for part of the night, when she didn’t know what else to do. Well, I guess she should be sleeping, but just thinking about a bit of cat fun made her look forward to the night.

And perhaps it was good that she was in the mood for a wakeful night, as it was the right night for it.

Chapter 11—A Ball of Yarn

The weather was warming and stored winter supplies were getting low for the resident mice who tried to not keep all that far away from the house, just in case there was a chance they could come in for a midnight snack.

Of all nights, this was the one they chose to make their next exploration trip into the big people house, with mice-catching dogs and cats. It was a brave move, but they figured they were hungry and quick enough to give it a try.

When at last all the people, men, women, and children had settled for a good night’s sleep, along with some pets, each in their own bed, the mice made their plan.

"I bet they have opened up new bag of grains to work with, since they are starting on new season. They've been able to keep it from us all this time, but if it's now open, I think we could just slip inside, grab what we want, and be gone without them even knowing," laughed one naughty mouse.

"But just make sure to not leave a trail of food when we leave. We don't want to be discovered. If we pick the right timing, and do it right, we might be able to return again and again without ever being found out, or at least not for a long time," replied the other accomplice to this deed.

"When we are sure all is quiet, that is the time to go in," the first one gave the order to the two others. "There is to be no sharing. Just take what you can and get out. Those who grab the most get the most," he said, revealing that their instincts of just taking and selfishness were part of their sneaky bad behaviour.

So when all was still, the mice worked their way through a hidden hole in the wall that they had been working on for some days.

Now at this very moment, Furry decided it was time to get playing with that ball of yarn.

She had a fun idea. "I want to see it roll down across the floor. It will be silent anyway, and then I can leap and catch it. I'll pretend it's my training for being better at catching mice. But where would be a good place for this game?"

"That's it! On the bag of grain I'll go," she said. Taking the yarn in her mouth she did a little leap and climb and got up onto it.

"This is great. The yarn ball will go far from here. One-two-three, go!" she told herself and let it go. Down it rolled very quickly, and just about as fast, down leapt Furry the Kitten to capture it.

"Again! That was fun!.. Oops I better be quiet or someone might wake."

Again she leapt and hopped up on the big sack, and down quickly rolled the yarn. She was about to pounce on it, when something better just made its way across the floor. "A mouse! Indeed it's good I was doing my training. I'm ready. I'm not going to let them spoil this bag of grain.

So Furry the Kitten sat very, very still and waited. Even though she actually would have rather played her fun game a few more times, there was work to be done and she was going to be grown-up now and do it.

"Hmm, perhaps I'll try a little something," she thought, and took a small handful, as quietly as she could, out of the bag, and tossed it down on the floor. She then remained very still again. Before too much longer a mouse, seeing this easy food, made his way over and began to munch.

Just at that moment when he was distracted by his own desires, Furry the Kitten leapt off the bag and with a pounce arrested, in her own way, the intruder and took him off and away. He wouldn't be returning.

Seeing the unhappy end of their leader, the rest chose to make a speedy exit while they still could.

"Guess it's not safe to try that; not with that fur ball on duty. Thought she'd be sleeping, but you never can know who might be on guard when you least expect it," one mouse said to the other as they were forced to merely eat the remains of the dog's food crumbs before returning to their home.

In the morning it was spotted that the bag hadn't been fully closed, and some grains were on the floor.

Mrs. Dweller took note and tied it up well.

"I think we need to keep a better watch on our open bags of food, so we aren't attracting unwanted visitors," she suggested at the breakfast table.

Friendly the Puppy noticed, that rather than being perky and having her milk right then, Furry was still napping.

"I wonder what happened in the night.... I bet Furry knows. I'll ask her about it when she gets up."

Chapter 12—Mr. And Mrs. Knightly

Sometime, half way through the spring, an unexpected team of visitors came by to see how things were going.

"Mabel!" called out Mrs. Dweller, as she saw her at the door of the house with her youngest.

And Mr. Carpenter and the girls went to find Mr. Dweller and the boys. They were in the barn doing their jobs.

But when Mr. Carpenter looked out to the field he saw another couple there working. He first had a questioning look on his face, but then remembered them as the couple he had worked with to add more rooms to this house.

"I see they've come back... or have come to stay?" he said. Mr. Dweller nodded and handed a fresh glass of water to each of the visitors.

"I'm very glad you have help. Very glad indeed."

While the men chatted, the boys took the girls around to see all the new baby animals and see the improvements in the farm and property.

"Wanna go for a race?" they asked the girls, but then noted it might not work so good with the dresses they put on, to look nice for a visit.

"Or how about soaking your feet in the stream and we'll pick you the nicest mountain flowers around we can find!"

Now that sounded a bit more right, and the girls agreed. They told their father, who together with Mr. Dweller, wandered on over to the stream to continue chatting as the children enjoyed the company and the sunshine.

Soon Mabel came out of the house with a basket of fresh berry buns. Mrs. Dweller had just baked a bunch for them to share for a lunch, but there was enough for all three families to share. While Mabel carried the basket and her little one, Mrs. Dweller brought some fresh milk to go along with them, as well as a few old blankets to be used on the bright green grass.

They looked around and found the children and fathers by the stream, and set up the snack there. Mrs. Dweller called out for Mr. and Mrs. Knightly to come and have lunch. Their girl was with them, having fun picking flowers too. They put down their tools, took a drink of water, and made their way over to the other families.

“Hello, good to see you again,” Mr. Carpenter and Mr. Knightly shook hands while the ladies hugged.

The older girls let the young one sit with them as they looked at each other’s flowers and tossed pebbles into the stream. A lot of chatter, laughter and splashing was going on.

“These buns are sure good, Mrs. Dweller,” said her husband. “You sure know how to perk up a work day and make it feel like we are feasting!”

“Well, it wouldn’t have been this fun if the children didn’t help lead us to the stream and inspire us for a picnic,” she said.

And the girls said, “And we wouldn’t have come if our parents didn’t want to see how you all were doing.”

It was a great time they all had. Hearty farewells, as well as ‘see you some time again, hopefully not too long from now’ comments were shared.

But before the family had a chance to leave, Mr. and Mrs. Knightly suddenly realised this was a wonderful opportunity to make plans for the near future. This was the very man they were going to need to meet with and ask if he could help them to build a home for them on this property. They had decided, just the day before, that they did want to stay on living here for as long as possible.

So, after a brief look at each other, Mr. and Mrs. Knightly quickly made their way over to the buggy.

“Say, got any plans at the start of summer?” Mr. Knightly asked Mr. Carpenter.

“What’chya got in mind, friend?” he replied with a question.

Mr. and Mrs. Knightly then explained about their plans to stay here and their need for help in building themselves a simple and small abode. And they said how the timing of seeing him was so perfect, so they could ask, if he would be free to help them.

“I think it could work out... in exchange for a favour,” Mr. Carpenter replied.

Mr. and Mrs. Knightly were happy to hear that, and were glad to help with anything that they could, in order to help them.

And so it was arranged that in about 6 six weeks there would be a swap of personnel. Mr. Carpenter would come to help build the house together with the other men, and Mrs. Knightly and her girl would stay with Mable and her girls, for that week, so they wouldn’t be left alone. They could then do all the gardening and pickling that they could, and preserving of fruits and berries.

It was a wonderful plan and worked out well.

And that is when the “Dwell-Nigh” farm was named, when Mr. and Mrs. Knightly came to form a good teamwork with the Dwellers. And for years later, the “Dwell-Nigh” farm helped to supply much of the goods needed by the mountain-living families.

They built rooms for guests to stay in, and it became a place for families to visit. Their boys had children for company in this way, as did everyone else, including trusty Rusty, Friendly Puppy, Kitty the Cat, and Furry the kitten. When everyone pulled together, they had a great time.