

My Friend Max

It was the year 1940 in London, England during WWII. It was 3:00 in the afternoon. The sun illuminated the earth, silhouetting the ominous warplanes overhead. The thunderous sound of bombs shook the school Just as it was ending.

“Bye guys!” called Tom hopefully “Whatever,” muttered everyone. They barely tolerated Tom at all-except for his friend Marly.

Tom was an 11-year-old boy who wasn't very popular at school. He had messy brown hair, Chocolate eyes and freckles scattered across his face. He dressed in a worn-out jumper with patched elbows. His shoes were scuffed at the toes.

After school, Tom usually went the town-hall way home, but this time he decided to go the woods route.

He heard a faint squealing. Tom followed the noise and found a very hungry German shepherd lying right under the willow tree, its long branches hanging low around him. His ribs showed because he was so thin-no weight left on him at all. His fur was dirty and clumped covering what used to be silk black and golden fur, his ears flopped unevenly, and his weak tail hardly moved. His legs were tucked under his ragged body like he was trying to disappear.

The dog had kind eyes and a warm presence. He was curled up on the ground beneath the willow, hardly moving.

“Oh, you poor thing,” Tom cried. “You must be hungry!”

Tom opened his ration box and tore a tiny bit of ham off his sandwich and pinched some salted nuts. He held out a pale and skinny shaky hand, and the dog licked the nuts and ham off. It tickled him, then he giggled softly.

“Your name is now Max,” he said quietly and ripped a dusty green vine off the willow tree just behind Max and tied it loosely around his neck. “And this is your collar.”

After that day, Tom took the woods route every day to see Max. Max started gaining weight and energy again until they began playing properly together.

They spent hours running through the woods, playing catch with a funny-shaped stick Tom had found. It looked like a worm with an uneven bobble on top, and Tom held it by the bobble so he didn't get slobber on his hands. Max loved chasing it and would bring it back every time, wagging his tail like crazy.

Tom sometimes lay on the damp mossy ground underneath the willow and told Max about what the bullies at school said to him. Max looked like he understood every word Tom said.

They had so many fun times together splashing in muddy puddles after rain, watching birds fly, and lying in the sun, just enjoying being with each other. Once, Max stole Tom's sock and refused to give it back until Tom bribed him with half a biscuit. “You're lucky you're cute,” Tom had muttered, shaking his head like an old man with no patience (even though he couldn't stop laughing). Another time they

found a crashed warplane, -that they explored- but had to get out quickly in case something bad was in there. later Max somehow managed to knock Tom over into a puddle while chasing a butterfly, and he got so muddy he looked like a soldier in disguise.

It was their own little world.

Tom had never had a friend like Max before, and Max seemed to need Tom just as much.

"Got to dash, Max. See you tomorrow, okay?"

"RWOOF," Max replied. Then Tom sprinted home.

Tom and Max had been best-friends for eight whole months.

At home, Tom's mum found out there was less food in his ration pack than before, so she walked him to school and back for three weeks. It was her way of punishing him. Normally, Tom wouldn't care, but this was Max who was going hungry!

"I'm doing this so you can stop being away with the fairies and eating away at your rations for no reason! What happens if you have to use them!" she shouted.

After three long weeks, Tom came back, but Max wasn't waiting by the tree like usual. He searched far and wide but no sign of his best-friend Max

Suddenly Tom heard a click then a squeal. He thought Max might just be hungry, so he started calling him.

"Max? Maaaax, come 'ere boy!" No reply. Tom started to get Anxious.

Max skittered around Desperately and let out a large and meaningful howl.

He ran toward the sound excitedly, then a muffled boom.

Everything went black, like someone had switched off a light. It was a land mine.

When Tom woke up, his head was pounding and his eyes were all blurry. His ears were ringing so loud it felt like thunder inside his skull. He couldn't think right.

Then, on the ground a little way away, something caught his blurry eyes.

He crawled over, shaking all over. On the dirt was Max's collar-torn, dirty Something Bad has happened Tom's throat felt like it was closing, like he couldn't breathe. Slowly, painfully, he looked up,

And there was Max. His lifeless body, still and left broken on the ground. and his uneven ears flopped on the Earthy growth of Moss.

His best friend. The only friend who ever loved him.

Tom's heart broke in two. It felt empty and cold and like it was going to stop. Tom wanted to be strong but tears came running down anyway.

Max was gone forever.

Tom buried Max beneath the willow, his hands shaking as he laid down the collar. The sadness broke his heart in two.

Fifteen years had passed like a quiet dream. Tom returned with his wife and young children to the old willow-tree where he met his best friend. As sunlight filtered through the leaves, he smiled and shared stories of muddy games, laughter, and the golden days spent with his best friend... Max.

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