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The True Story of a Dog

Mary Graham Bonner

This is a true story about a dog named Dash.

Dash was an Irish setter, old but full of life, and he belonged to an army family. His master was a young lieutenant; the lieutenant's father was a general. Dash had spent his whole life on army posts, and what he loved above all things was the sound of guns — the crack of target practice, the deep boom of a ceremonial salute. Every one of those sounds made him feel he was exactly where he belonged.

Then one summer, the family moved to a small, quiet village where nothing ever happened. No guns, no bugles, no drills. Dash began to droop. He lay in his corner and seemed to forget how to be himself. The family quietly worried he was simply growing old.

Then came the Fourth of July.

The first enormous firecracker went off in the street. Dash lifted his head. Another followed. He was on his feet before the echo died — bounding out of his corner, barking with everything he had. The whole household was shaken awake, and no one minded in the least.

That evening, the young lieutenant and a friend slipped away to the river to let off a few cannon firecrackers — the large kind, too dangerous for the streets.

"Dash has had his supper and calmed down," the lieutenant said. "We'll be fine."

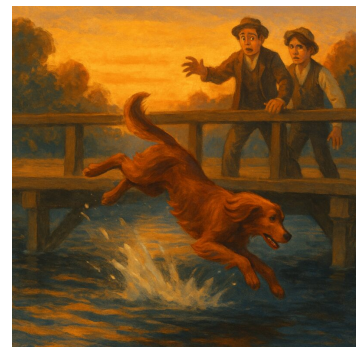
They threw the first cracker from the bridge. It hit the water and went off with a tremendous report. They had just thrown the second — still lit — when Dash came hurtling out of nowhere and flung himself into the river, swimming hard toward the place where it had landed.

These crackers had been sold as guaranteed to go off.

Dash reached it. He sniffed at it.

It did not go off.

His master stood on the bridge and breathed the deepest sigh of relief of his entire life.



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