

Milly Unleashed

FIRST IN A SERIES OF FOUR SHORT STORIES
BASED ON THE LIFE OF A SEARCH AND RESCUE DOG

by Milly Morning



My first memories as a pup were dominated by feeding times, but it was not the milk I remembered 'cos, I've never really been interested in food even in those early days. It was the humans, lots of them; in fact, to be precise, coach-loads of humans every day, except Saturdays. Smell! Now that was the really big thing! Boy did those humans smell! Now, I know dogs are famous for their sense of smell, so we should be, I understand our 'sniffers' are up to sixty times better than a humans. But honestly, some of them you could almost taste their smell before they got out of the coach.

The big, hairy, fat ones and the thin, bony, wrinkly ones they all smelt more strongly than Old Blaven who lived in the oil drum; (my Mum told me Old Blaven was over eighty in doggie years, and still around, 'cos Farmer Neil had a really soft spot for her). And then there were the wee ones, running about excitedly, poking and squealing and wanting to pick me up all the time. Blimey they smelt real good, hands and faces smeared in sticky sweet stuff.

I can understand if you are a little confused, let me explain – my brothers and sisters and I, were brought up in a field on a farm close to Aviemore. My parents and extended family (there were thirty-six in all at the time!) are what you humans call 'working sheep dogs'.

Some of the lucky ones lived in ram-shackled old cars, wooden boxes, out-houses and even an old suitcase. My siblings and I were born in a field; it was early summer, Mum had a wee wooden box to take us into if we needed shelter, but most of the time we were happy running around the field playing and scrapping with our siblings. Dad, not sure about Dad... it could have been Corrie the wise old Collie/Kelpie cross who lived in the battered old B Reg Cortina, but possibly not... Aonach was another possibility (he was kind of cute!); it was just something about the way he held his nose as he passed by the nursery area on his way to the big field, as though he had a vague interest in us, but it was all a bit beneath him... Mum didn't seem bothered anyway; I remember her saying 'It's typical, the dogs prance around looking all important, but it's the bitches that end up doing all the work'.

There were six of us, three brothers and three sisters. Life was fun. The smelly humans loved us and often seemed more interested in us pups than the 'grown-up' dogs that did the sheep dog demonstrations in the field in front of the farm. We were lavished with affection, cuddled, mauled, played with and crooned over six days a week – I just loved it!

That was the early days. But I knew things

were going to change when Mum started getting kind of snappy and grumpy and short with us. It was time to grow up and move into a bigger world.

One day SHE arrived. I was about six weeks old; she picked me up, poked and prodded and asked Farmer Neil lots of questions about me. I somehow knew this human was different to the rest. I'm going to call her 'SPECIAL HUMAN' from now on, 'cos she seems to have become a big part of my life. She had something in her pocket that squeaked, I heard the humans calling it 'squeaky toy', it sounded exciting! My brothers and sisters didn't think so, most of them shot under the nearest shed and looked out nervously, tails between their legs. But I'd always been a wee bit 'cocky', Mum regularly growled to put me in my place. The excitement of the toy and Special Human jumping around excitedly was too much. Paws akimbo, I was off, chasing the toy which was rolling down the bank, avidly chased by one of my pesky brothers! 'Whey, hey, I got there first... stitch that boy!' I grabbed it with my sharp puppy teeth and braced myself as bro' landed on top of me, trying to grab it. Shaking him off, I proudly ran back to the excited Special Human and dropped it at her feet.

'That's the one!' I heard Special Human say to Farmer Neil. Next thing, I'd been picked up and carried into a shiny blue car, it wasn't at all like Corrie's B Reg Cortina which I'd sneaked into once before. It smelt great! Wow, I was almost bowled over by the pungent smell of a pair of rock boots lying on the floor in the front of the car. In fact the rock boots were just the start of a multitude of fantastic new human smells which engulfed me as I started to explore... The car started moving, slowly at first, down the field and then out of the gate; onto that noisy road I'd always been warned to stay away from by Mum.

Little did I know that the first chapter of my life was over and that I was heading into an exciting new world of mountain rescue...

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