

LOOK BEYOND

By Cindy Taft

There once was a grumpy old dog named Patches. Nothing made him happy. He never saw the good things in life, only the bad. He never appreciated the simple things. All he did was complain. No one liked to be around him. His only friend was a pup who lived next door. His name was Rowdy. Rowdy loved life and every day was a new adventure. He greeted each day with a smile and it was this smile he carried to his friend, Patches.

One beautiful spring day, an afternoon shower was passing by when Rowdy happened to meet Patches on the sidewalk.

“It’s raining and I’m wet,” grumbled Patches.

“Look beyond the rain,” Rowdy said cheerfully. “The grass needed a drink and the puddles are perfect. Come and jump in them with me.”

“No,” mumbled Patches. “I’m wet enough and I’m going home.”

“Okay,” said Rowdy. “But you’re going to miss a lot of fun.”

Patches slowly walked off, dripping and squishing. The last thing he heard behind him was “yahoo” and a great big splash.

Weeks later a wonderful summer day broke with the dawn. Rowdy found Patches walking very slowly by the playground.

“It’s sunny and I’m hot,” grumbled Patches.

“Look beyond the sun,” replied Rowdy. “The flowers are blooming and the birds are singing. Come have a picnic with me. I know where some tasty bones are buried.”

“No,” said Patches. “I’m hot enough and I’m going home to lie in the shade.”

“Okay,” said Rowdy as he turned and ran to the park, chasing a few butterflies along the way.

Later that night, Rowdy went to see Patches.

“It’s dark and I can’t see,” grumbled Patches.

“Look beyond the dark,” said Rowdy. “Look at the twinkling stars in the sky and listen to the hoot owl in the old maple tree. Come take a walk with me. There are lots of wonderful things to hear in the dark.”

“No,” answered Patches. “It’s too dark and I’m staying home.”

“Okay,” said Rowdy as he bounced off happily into the night.

Days went by. Patches lay in his dog house grumbling and grumbling.

“Where is that kid,” he mumbled to himself. “I haven’t seen him in days.” Patches would never admit it, but Rowdy had become very important to him. He looked forward to his visits. He loved the big warm smile

Rowdy always had on his face. He missed his little friend. He decided to go and look for him.

Patches made his way to Rowdy's dog house. Bending down he looked in. He saw Rowdy lying very still.

"Hey kid, what's wrong?" asked Patches, but Rowdy didn't answer. Patches could see Rowdy shaking and his chest rising up and down very slowly. He knew his friend was sick. Patches crawled into the small little house and curled himself around Rowdy's shivering little body. Slowly, Rowdy opened his eyes. "Thanks, Patches," he spoke very softly.

"You're welcome," Patches said.

The next few days, Patches stayed by his little friend's side, giving him the strength he needed to get well. During this time, Patches did a lot of thinking. He realized that he had missed out on a lot of chances to enjoy life all because he had been too busy grumbling and complaining. The love from this small little pup lying next to him had taught him a very important lesson. Living meant playing in puddles and having picnics and chasing butterflies. It meant taking a walk in the dark with a friend.

Weeks later, Rowdy came bounding into Patches' yard.

"I know its cold, Patches, but would you jump in the leaves with me?" asked Rowdy.

Patches looked at the wonderful little puppy who had always been there for him. Rowdy had never given up on Patches. There, standing before him was one of the greatest treasures in the world – a true friend.

"Yes," Patches replied to Rowdy, "Let's have some fun."
