

Thodoris Castrinos

A dog named Joe

Fairy tale



Once upon a time there was a dog named Joe.

Joe was black with a tuft of white hair on his chest.

Joe was an ordinary street dog, one of those stray dogs that we use to call bastards or slugs.

His father was probably a mongrel and his mother was one of the ordinary thousands of dogs that people furiously kick in the streets.

Joe was brought up in the streets.

His daily food was found in the garbage and he thanked mostly his luck for being alive and having avoided accidents rather than the dexterity of the car drivers.

He got his name from a man who called him Joe when he was young.



Joe believed that humans were wise since they could have as much food as they wanted. So he simply thought that as long as the man called him Joe, Joe was his name.

Joe was tall and stout and like most stray dogs he was clever and quite strong.

To be clever and strong are not so important for a domestic dog; but for a stray who has to take care of himself without any help; it was a matter of life and death. That means he had to be capable of finding his daily food, a safe place to sleep and to have his place among the other neighbourhood dogs.

Joe like almost all the street dogs had a dream. To become a domestic dog.

In his mind, it meant that he would not have to worry about his daily food; he would have

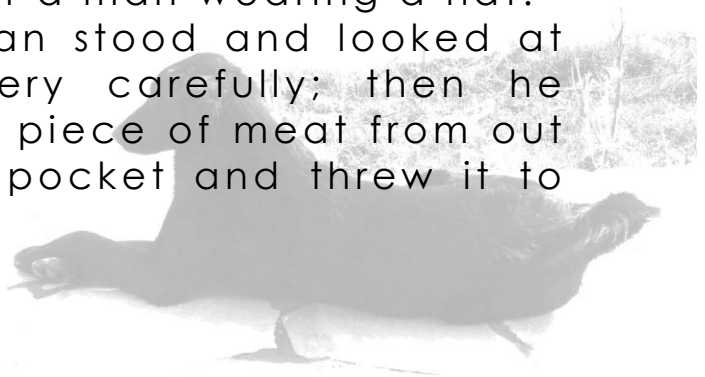
a worm carpet to lie down on and sleep and a friendly hand to pat him.

These were the sweet dreams of the street dogs that didn't know how the domestic dogs really lived.

The street dogs didn't know that sometimes humans treated house dogs badly and kicked them. They had no idea about all the silly things that humans ask from their dogs; such as walking on their two hind feet just to prove that they are obedient.

One day, Joe was wondering outside a tavern looking for food when he found himself in front of a man wearing a hat.

The man stood and looked at him very carefully; then he took a piece of meat from out of his pocket and threw it to him.



Joe was going to catch it but all of a sudden, a white dog that happened to be next to him, grabbed the meat and devoured it.

Joe was very angry but he couldn't do anything. He was staring at the man with the hat in case he had another piece to give him, but the man had turned his back walking away quickly.

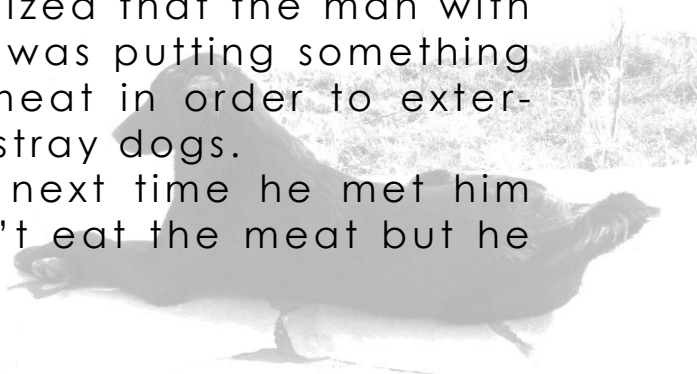
The next day Joe found the white dog dead.

Two days later, Joe saw the man with the hat again, throwing another piece of meat to another dog.

The next day this dog was dead too.

Joe realized that the man with the hat was putting something in the meat in order to exterminate stray dogs.

So, the next time he met him he didn't eat the meat but he



rushed towards him and tore his pants, digging his teeth deeply into his leg.

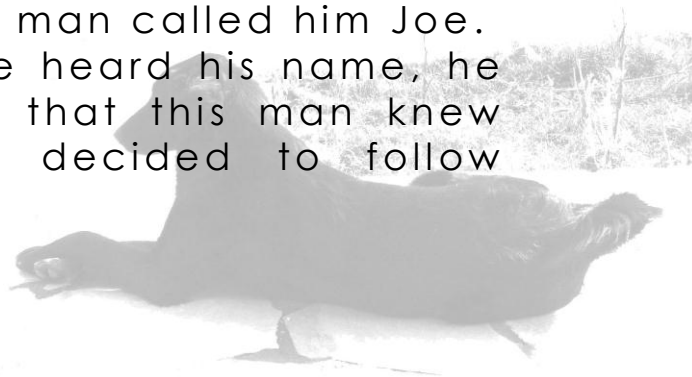
The man with the hat left screaming and never showed up again.

Since then, Joe was afraid of eating anything and avoided humans as much as he could.

After some time Joe met another man. He had a very calm voice and a friendly face. Joe approached him carefully and he allowed him to pat his back.

Joe was sure that the man wanted to take him along with him. He was very hesitant but he had never forgotten his old dream to become a house dog.

Then, the man called him Joe. When Joe heard his name, he was sure that this man knew him and decided to follow him.



Shortly afterwards Joe was in a huge house with a big garden. He belonged now to the man's family. He was a house dog!

In the beginning everything was marvellous.

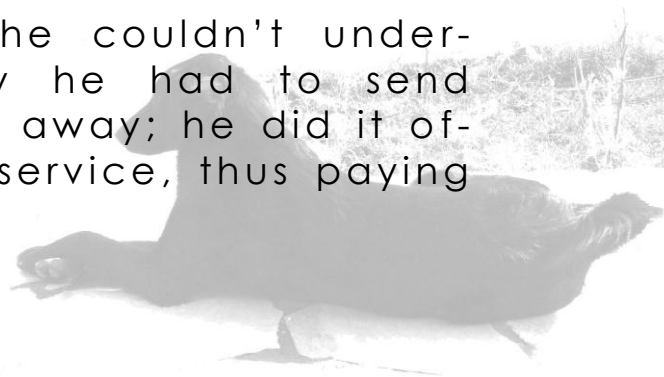
Joe could have as much food as he wanted and a nice wooden house in the garden.

During the winter he was allowed to spend the cold nights on a warm carpet in the house.

His main duty was to guard the house.

He walked up and down in the garden and he chased anyone that came close; human or animal.

Although he couldn't understand why he had to send everybody away; he did it offering his service, thus paying



back for his daily food as he knew that this was his master's wish.

Yes, now Joe had a master!

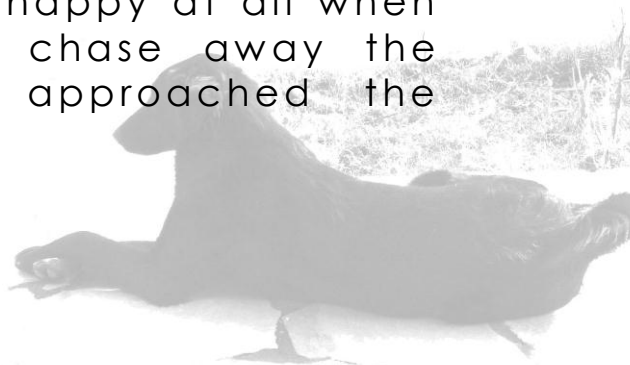
Time passed by and Joe wanted to get out of the garden but that was not permitted.

Soon, Joe stared at the big iron bars with such a frown; these bars that separated the garden from the rest of the world and the house dogs from the stray dogs.

When he was a street dog he wanted very much to pass through the bars and get into the garden; but now he wanted more and more to escape the bars and get out.

He had missed the company of the dogs and the freedom to go wherever he wanted.

He was not happy at all when he had to chase away the dogs that approached the



garden; but in this way he secured his daily food.

Sometimes he was jealous watching the stray dogs walking down the street with their arrogant look, their tail strait up, accompanied by female dogs, while he had to be locked up in the garden.

His master took care of him and fed him well; but he was not his friend.

It is not possible to be a master and a friend at the same time!

Joe was obliged to obey and do whatever his master asked, because if he didn't he was punished.

His master trained him to do several stupid things.

When his master's friends came home, he asked to do these silly things, to prove that he was a clever and an obedient dog.



That made his master very proud.

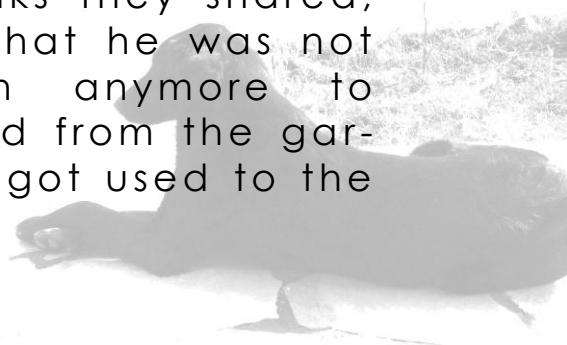
These particular moments, Joe felt so foolish.

For all these reasons Joe was very sad.

He had lost his good mood and his mind was constantly on the bars, which separated the garden from the outside world, with eyes full of sorrow.

He could jump over the bars but he didn't decide to do it because he knew that once he ran away he could never come back and then no food, no warmth. He had got used to all these things and he didn't want to lose them.

Sometimes he recalled his street dog friends and the long night walks they shared, but he knew that he was not skilful enough anymore to search for food from the garbage. He had got used to the



easy life and he had become incompetent to do all the things that had done in the past.

So, Joe stayed behind the bars, keeping away from his old friends whom he wanted to be with again, so much; having his daily food secured, in exchange.

Time passed by and Joe was getting older and fatter. He was changing day by day and as was forgetting the past. Forgetting and looking more sorrowful.

Joe had acquired everything that he had dreamt of, but he was not happy.

He had ensured, as we say, room and board but he had lost the freedom to go wherever he wanted and to be with those whom he wanted to be.

Also, he was obliged to tolerate his master's whims without complaining.



These were the reasons for his sadness, but he tried to comply with the situation since he couldn't change anything.

That's why he chose to keep forgetting.

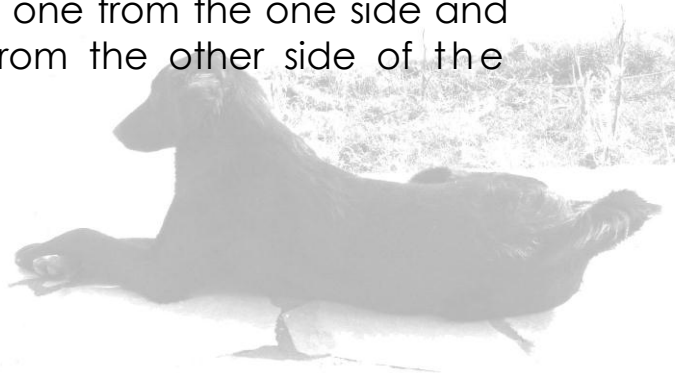
One night, Joe sniffed another dog passing outside the garden.

So, he stood up and approached the bars to bark at him as always; but to his great surprise he saw an identical dog just like him, black with a white tuft of hair on his chest.

Joe stayed still and stared at him, his eyes popping out. So did the other dog.

After a while, when they got over their surprise, they both approached the bars and started sniffing at each other.

Always, the one from the one side and the other from the other side of the bars.



-It seems that we look alike, said Joe.

-Oh, we don't just look alike, we are identical, said the other dog.

-How did you get here? Joe asked.

-I was always here, answered the other dog.

-What is your name? Joe asked.

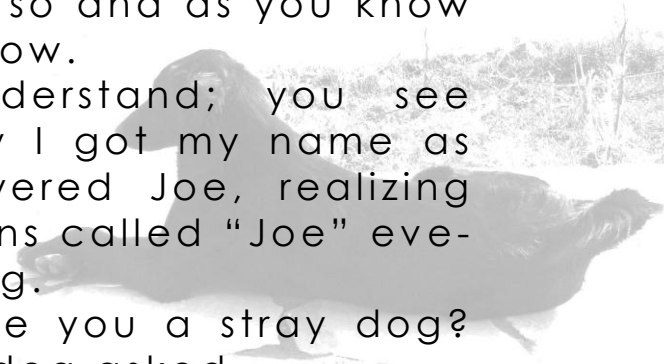
-Joe, answered the other dog.

-Oh, no! This is my name, said Joe.

-I don't know about you, said the other dog, I know that my name is from a human that called me so and as you know humans know.

-Oh I understand; you see that's how I got my name as well, answered Joe, realizing that humans called "Joe" every stray dog.

-Wow, were you a stray dog? The other dog asked.



- Yes, answered Joe, but this was a long time ago.

-Lucky you! How did you manage to become a house dog?

-Don't mention it, answered Joe; it is not so much important, it just happened.

-What are you talking about, said the other dog, you have got everything and you are not happy? I wish I had your luck.

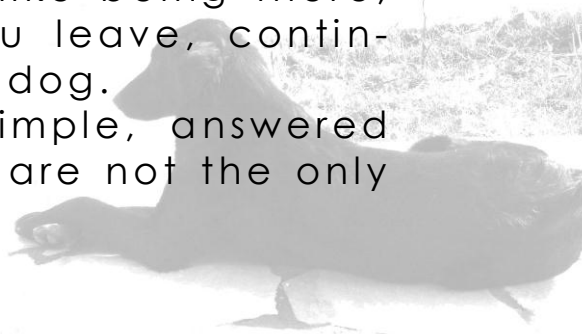
-Listen my friend, said Joe, things are not as you imagine. I know the other side and that's why I 'm telling you all these things.

You don't know.

-Anyway, I would rather be in you place, said the other dog. Joe stayed silent.

-If you don't like being there, why don't you leave, continued the other dog.

-It's not so simple, answered Joe. The bars are not the only



obstacle. There is more than that, but it is not easy to explain.

-If you really wanted, you could have gone, said the other dog with confidence.

-You are right, answered Joe, but I don't know if I can get out in the streets again. Besides, I cannot decide if I want to get out.

-Oh, yes, said the other dog, you are settled here.

-Yes, I 'm settled, answered Joe, but that's not enough. I miss a lot of things. I cannot go for a walk, nor have friends. Under normal circumstances I should have barked at you to go away. Think of that!

-Why? The other dog asked.

-I don't know why but I have to, answered Joe.



They had a long lasting conversation that evening and since then every evening the stray dog Joe came to talk with our Joe.

Every time they met, each one was jealous of the other's luck.

One evening the stray dog Joe did not show up. Our Joe was disappointed and hoped to see him the next evening. But the stray dog Joe didn't show up the next or any other evening since then.

So, they lost each other.

Joe wished that his friend had found what he was looking for and didn't have the bad luck to meet the man with the hat. For our Joe, the stray dog Joe represented all the things he wanted but he never dare to choose.

One day Joe's master brought home a new young dog.



At first, Joe was worried because he didn't know if he had to share his food with the newcomer, but soon he realized that there was no problem.

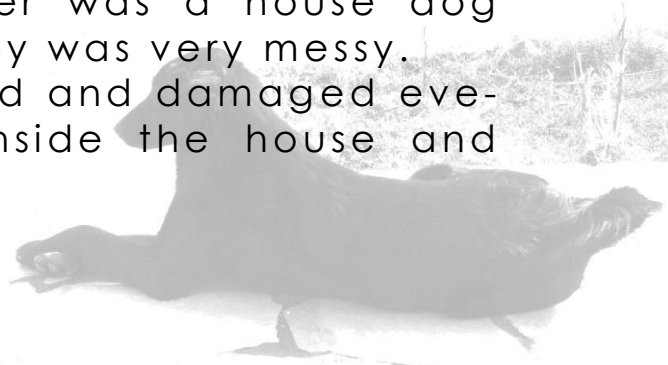
Of course he was jealous because his master showed more interest in the newcomer, but he also thought that this new situation might be better as at least he would have someone who could understand his language.

The master called the newcomer Bobby.

Joe thought that it was a silly name for a dog, but this was the will of the master, and so be it.

Bobby was very young and he had never lived in the streets. His mother was a house dog and Bobby was very messy.

He spoiled and damaged everything inside the house and



he always claimed the best place on the carpet.

Of course, he was punished very often but nothing could knock sense into him.

Joe tried to teach him several things but it was a waste of time and effort.

So, time was passed by and Bobby grew up, became more responsible and it began performing his task of barking at strangers.

Now Joe could spend his time sitting all day and doing nothing.

He used to sit and stare at the bars for hours and he really had a lot of time to spend.

He was thinking that "you can take it or leave it", that's life!

You cannot have everything!

Since he chose to be a house dog, this was his life. It was obvious that he couldn't be a stray dog at the same time.



So, Joe spent his whole life in the garden, behind the bars, always having enough food and a warm place to sleep.

He spent his whole life well fed, warmth but sad.

When his time came, he died, and the last thing that his sorrowful eyes saw, where the bars.

Those bars that, when he was young, he wanted so much to pass through into the garden and wanted so much to go out of in the streets when he got old.

These last moments, Bobby was beside him and heard his last words.

“The bars, jump over the bars...”

