

## **The Old Man and the Dog**

The old man sits in his armchair, rug over his legs, while his old dog lies by his side on its blanket. The room is quiet.

"I'll take you for your walk in a bit," says the old man. His dog looks up and wags his tail, slowly.

"Bit hot out there." The dog grunts.

"Run out of dog-food. We'll have to go and get some." The dog raises an eyebrow.

"I know. You don't much care. Never seen you eat so little." The dog lowers its eyebrow.

"How old are you, now? Let's see. Fourteen or fifteen, I think." No reaction from the dog.

"Getting on a bit, eh? Like me. We're neither of us young, anymore." The dog looks up sympathetically.

"Do you remember when I first got you from the rescue centre? That was a long time ago, eh?" The dog sighs.

"By heck, you were a right terror. All over the place, you were. Wouldn't sit still. I nearly took you back, I can tell you." The dog sighs again as though it's heard this story before.

"Still, we got on alright, after a bit. I'll never forget that time you rounded up all those lost sheep for the farmer. Was he pleased! Wanted to buy you from me. I said no thanks, this dog is staying with me." The dog lifts its head off the ground and gives a brief bark. The old man strokes its head.

"He gave us the run of his fields, he did. And how you enjoyed that. Running about like mad. Not so quick now, eh?" The dog looks at him reproachfully.

"I know. I know. I'm pretty slow meself, these days." The dog relaxes.

"I expect we'll miss each other when we're gone, eh?" The dog blinks.

"The way I feel, it won't be long. Feel tired all the time." The dog lifts its head and puts it on one side, looking at the old man.

"Got to get you to the vet. For that limp. Probably arterio-whatsit." The dog yawns.

"I feel tired and I feel cold. Fed up with it." The dog grunts.

"We didn't get far, but we had a good walk day before yesterday, didn't we?" The dog looks up, hopefully.

"No. We're not going just yet. I don't feel up to it." The dog looks at the old man carefully.

"Some days, I feel fair worn out. And today's one of them." The dog continues to look at the old man.

"I'm tired. I think I'll have a snooze." The dog grunts.

"We'll go for a walk in a bit. Alright?" The dog settles down.

The old man gently snores for a while and then stops. His head falls to one side. The dog glances up at him, slowly gets up and stands by the armchair, looking at the old man. He stands like that for a few minutes. Then he lies down on his blanket. After a while he gives a little shudder and his head falls to one side. The room is quiet.