

Dogs Don't Fly

By David Lloyd Wilson

Chapter 2 Patch the Duster Pilot

“What do you mean dogs don't fly?” protested Nevell.

The old duster seemed to consider this for a moment. “I guess I never really thought too much about why, that is just the way of the world. As long as I can remember cats have been doing the flying and dogs have been doing the farming.”

The little beagle had climbed from the wreckage and raised himself to his full height. Even straining on his tip toes he barely came to the old dusters shoulder. Patch was bigger than most cats Nevell had seen. The big gray tom had clearly been around for some time. His ears were ragged and many scars could be seen from the youthful days of fighting and prowling that all young toms endure.

“My name is Nevell, Nevell Beagle, pleased to meet you.”

“Pleased to meet you Nevell, my given name is Icarus Graymane, but everybody just calls me Patch.”

For a moment, Nevell was not sure how one is supposed to greet a cat. In polite dog society one is supposed to sniff the new acquaintance. Tentatively, Nevell leaned forward to catch the dusters scent. Patch, sensing the awkward moment, leaned down and brushed his whiskers against the beagle's muzzle. Nevell obliged with two small sniffs, and the formalities were completed.

“Patch, can I ask you something? Have you ever heard if dogs could fly, or only that they don't?”

“Well,” said Patch, “I don't suppose I ever looked at it that way.”

Looking at what was left of his airplane, the beagle replied, “I will fly someday Patch. I didn't get it right this time, but I will someday.”

The old duster looked at the near disaster that had played out that day and felt concern for the brave little beagle. Nevell could have hurt himself badly and it was indeed a miracle that he hadn't.

“I'll tell you what Nevell, if you promise that you will hold off on your flying experiments for a while, I could give you a ride in the Stearman. That one right over there.”

“Really, you would take me flying in your airplane?”

“Sure, if you promise not to try this again.” replied the cat.

Nevell couldn't believe it; he would get to actually fly. With a yelp he turned and started toward the big orange airplane with Patch in tow. As Nevell got closer to the big duster plane he was amazed at the natural beauty that this flying machine possessed. In front was the engine with its circular row of cylinders all black and chrome. The wings were rounded on the ends and had several wood and wires bracing them. As he circled around he noted that the tail rested on a small wheel attached under what he would later learn was called the rudder.

It seems such a natural way for an airplane to rest on the ground thought Nevell. The nose pointed slightly skyward which would only be proper for an airplane. The wheels up front under the wings were much larger. He also noted that under the lower wings there were a series of tubes and brackets that went into the body of the airplane. Later he would learn that this was called the boom. Nevell took it all in and was just beginning to wonder were he would ride when he noticed that the duster plane had only one seat.

“Patch, where do I ride?”

“Oh, don't worry about that. Tomorrow is Saturday. I don't work on weekends. You come by the airstrip and I will take out the hopper that is in the front seat.” explained Patch.

“Oh thank you Patch. How will I find you?”

On the way home Nevell studied the directions that Patch had given him and wondered what his parents would think. His mother and father had always understood the difference between their son and other dogs. Sometimes they worried, but mostly they just hoped that Nevell would outgrow his solitary forays to the high places. Had they known the true purpose for these trips they would likely have been less understanding.

Nevell decided that he would not say anything to them about the real reason he was going to Patch's flying field that Saturday. Since it was customary for dogs to do other interesting things up until the time for settling down and farming, he would tell them he was only looking for a job before the harvest season. His father of course knew

Patch and would likely think nothing of this. The old dusters field was a few miles from Nevell's house so he would be able to walk the distance with no difficulty.

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