

FILBERT

On the hottest day of summer, in an empty field of grass, Filbert ran free. Somehow, it just seemed fitting. While the rest of us sought relief in the comfort of the shadows, Filbert forged on. Tail wagging, heart churning, and paws slicing through the turf as if they may never get another chance. You see, memories run deep.

No one really knows how old Filbert is. One maybe. Two? And no one really knows where he was born or how he lost his leg. He just showed up at the pound one day and that's the way it was. Filbert, the three-legged dog.

How can you measure the heart of a being when it's hidden so deep inside? You can't. If you could, there would be no long shots in this world, and that's what Filbert was. A long shot.

A few weeks earlier and a few miles away, a pretty girl with brown hair and blue eyes went through the boredom of her day. It was always the same. One patient at a time, one x-ray after the next, until the clock struck five. Then, and only then, would she be truly free.

For Brittany, the farm was always within reach. It had to be. It's what she loved. Things are funny that way. When you truly love something, you just seem to find the time. It's essential. Part of a person's being. And for Brittany, a life without animals would be no life at all.

Her horse Molly, was a golden brown creature whose coat resembled a carefully toasted marsh mellow, cooked to perfection over a fire in the fall. She was tall, elegant and sleek. Her dog Rusty was handsome too. A faithful companion with tan fur and a graying nose, giving notice that he was no longer new to this world. All of them together, in fields of yellow and green, made for a perfect picture, and life was good.

Back at the shelter, Filbert had just been returned, again. Somehow, the adoption just didn't seem to "stick". And now, in some imperceptible way, Filbert seemed just a little smaller in the confines of his cage.

Filbert is just an average looking dog with an average coat of black. A sprinkling of white here and there, as if someone spilled salt from a shaker upon his back. His long tail, tipped with white, stretched upward toward the sky. And at first glance, he looked cute. Certainly, cute enough to free him from the bars that contained him. But then again, up close, there was that leg. The missing one. The one that almost sealed his fate.

Where does compassion come from? Is it learned? Taught? Or is it a gift from God, given to a select few to help make the world a better place for the rest of us? I don't think we'll ever really know, but without it, Filbert never would have had a chance.

There wouldn't have been donations that rolled in from estates, philanthropists, and little old ladies. There wouldn't have been a collection box filled with food and toys for the orphaned and the unwanted. And there wouldn't be Brittany, or hope.

I wasn't there the day Filbert and Brittany's paths crossed. I'm not sure what led her to the pound that day, or why Filbert was the lucky one. Maybe Brittany just saw things a little differently. Maybe, she didn't see the missing leg, just the three good ones, and maybe, just maybe, difference is what saved him.

Brittany and I met a few weeks after the adoption and she walked me around the farm. I was looking for a location to shoot a Public Service Announcement for the shelter that Filbert once called home. The farm was beautiful. And so was Molly, and Rusty, and Brittany, and Filbert, too.

So, that's how it had come to pass. That on the hottest day of summer, as cameras rolled in an empty field of green, Filbert ran free. Tail wagging, heart churning, and paws slicing through the turf as if they may never get a another chance.

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