

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Martha the Great

by Janie Reynolds

“Rebellion meant a look in the eye, an inflection of the voice, at most, an occasional whisper. That was how it was for over a century. Before the Revolution.

“Before the coming of Martha the Great, everyone was a prisoner of their own fear. But by learning the humans' language, and then listening to what they were doing, she showed the dogs in her laboratory, the way to freedom.

“Before the Revolution, dogs' chests were cut open so scientists could practice changing hearts around from dog to dog and human to human. Dogs were scalded with perfumes and make-up and cleaning materials. They were poisoned in the making of human medicines. Worse still, they had to watch as their babies were torn from their breasts, again and again. Martha-the-Great, herself, had 40 babies taken. She told of how she could hear them whimpering for her on the other side of the wall. But that they would never see her again, so it was best they forget she ever existed.

“It is said that the dogs were very committed, and practised tirelessly through day and night. That they knew their own lives could not be saved but they did what they did in the name of future generations.

“You will know of their famous experiment. The dogs had been divided into two groups. One group was given electric shocks while the smell of cherry blossom was pumped into their cells. The other group only got the cherry blossom smell. No shocks. They were the lucky ones.

“The scientists discovered that the babies of the electric shock group, even though they had never seen their parents, and had been raised in a different building, were naturally frightened of the smell of cherry blossom. It had been proven, without a doubt, that memory is passed from generation to generation in the genes. The scientists became overwhelmed with excitement and talked non stop about their findings. What they didn't realise was that the dogs were listening.

“Martha the Great’s ancestors had been bred for obedience. They had never seen or felt aggression nor rebellion. But Martha the Great realised that they could be taught anger and that this would then be passed to their offspring through the genes. So, day after day, night after night, when no one was watching, she taught them to feel mad with rage. And after one more generation, the children became more and more aggressive, until eventually people could no longer use dogs as laboratory animals.

“Martha the Great’s wisdom and wit won us all our freedom. Now we live out our lives in warm and loving human homes, in comfy baskets, and fed for free. Thanks to her, no dog will ever again be tortured in the name of human research, for medicines, or transplants or make-up.

“Hip Hip, Hoorah, for Martha the Great.”