

Anancy and Dog and Puss and Friendship *by James Berry*

Bro Puss insists on doing the shopping, even when he's not fit and well.

Anancy sees Bro Puss walking down the road with a stick and his leg all bandaged up. Anancy can't believe it's Bro Puss hobbling towards him, carrying a shopping basket.

Anancy stops.

"Oh Bro Puss, I'd say good morning. But as you're all so hurt, how can it be a good morning for you?"

"You take no notice, Bro Nancy," Bro Puss says "I'm well enough. All the same, good morning, Bro Nancy."

"But – what bad luck has overtaken you with so much pain?"

"Ah, Bro Nancy! It's nobody else besides Bro Dog."

"Bro Dog? Bro Dog has damaged you?" Anancy is shocked.

Sad-sad Bro Puss looks down. He nods his head and says "Yes, Bro Nancy. Bro Dog has damaged me. Bro Dog has actually broken my leg."

"But how?" asks Anancy, "Just out of sudden badness?"

"Well," Puss says, "As you know, me and Mrs Puss share our home duties. And a few days ago, I went to the shop and waited in the queue. When I happened to point out I was the first to be served Bro Dog jumped on me, held me and tossed me against the wall. Next thing I knew I couldn't get up. Couldn't raise myself, Bro Nancy. Then I saw I couldn't walk at all."

"Oh, maddest madness!" Bro Nancy says. "Crazy madness! That's not like the Bro Dog I know." Bro Nancy shakes his head. "No, not at all."

"But it is, you know," Puss says. "It's just him. It's just Bro Dog. It's just him...All the same – can you speak to him for me?"

"Speak to him?" Anancy says. "I'll go right now and ask Bro Dog about this damage he's done to you."

Anancy goes straight off to see Bro Dog and when he gets there he sits down and starts to talk to Bro Dog all friendly-friendly. "Bro Dog, I met a man today. You may call him Bro Kitten. And you know what has happened to Bro Kitten?"

"No," Dog says "What?"

"Bro Lion has broken Bro Kitten's leg."

"Badness," Dog says. "Terrible badness! Lions are all the same. Wild and ignorant. What else can you expect? They get no schooling whatsoever. None."

"Bro Dog," Anancy says, "suppose I should say, that Bro Kitten is Bro Puss. And that Bro Lion is you. What would you say?"

Bro Dog goes quiet, then says, "I'd say, I'm ashamed. Badly, badly ashamed."

"Ashamed enough to make the broken leg come good?"

"I can't mend broken legs. I can't, can I?"

"No Bro Dog," Anancy says. "But you can mend a lot-lot by becoming friends."

"Me getting friendly with Puss? After breaking his leg? Would he even talk to me?"

"Bro Puss himself asked me to come and talk to you," Anancy says.

"Really?" Dog says, guilty and surprised and then says "It seems Puss knows I feel bad I damaged him."

"Suppose," Anancy says, "Maybe both of you could meet, eye to eye, not too cross, cool-cool, with only a little bad-mind?"

"Would it be all right," Dog says. "It would be good. If you can fix it up."

Anancy works as a go-between. Anancy gets the badness between Dog and Puss really cooled off. Everyday now Bro Dog goes to the house of Bro and Mrs Puss. He gets wood for them. He gets water. He fetches and he carries practically everything. By the time the leg of Puss is healed up again, he and Dog are perfect-perfect friends.

One day, Bro Dog invites Bro Puss to come to the seaside with him. Bro Puss hesitates, not really wanting to go, but still not wanting to be the first to refuse a friendly request.

They go to the seaside.

Dog promptly slips into the sea and begins to swim and dive and do all kinds of things in the water, enjoying himself. Puss sits under a coconut tree and watches.

Bro Dog waves to Puss, calls him, "Come on in!" he calls "Come on. The water's great!"

"I'll stay here and watch you," Puss calls back.

Dog floats, dives and leaps out of the water. Every now and then Dog calls to Puss to come in the water. And every time Puss calls back saying, "I'll stay here and watch you." People on the beach become amused by Bro Puss and Bro Dog.

As Dog comes out of the water, Puss compliments him on being such an excellent swimmer.

"Anybody can do it," Dog says. "Anybody – who isn't frightened."

"It's a talent you have," Puss says, "and I don't. That's why I sit and watch you."

"Oh, come off it," Dog says. "Anybody can swim."

Bro Puss says nothing more about his lack of enjoyment of water.

A few days later, at holiday time, Puss specially invites Dog to a packed lunch at a well-used picnic and beauty spot.

Not having eaten on purpose, Dog arrives hungry, ready to tuck into the special feast-lunch both Mrs and Bro Puss prepared together. Yet, Bro Puss seems in no hurry to begin the eating, and Bro Dog has to sit under the tree listening to the long drawn-out tales Bro Puss is telling about his family.

Then sudden-sudden, Bro Puss picks up the well-stuffed bag of food and puts it on his shoulders. He fastens himself up against the tree. And calm-calm, Bro Puss climbs himself up and up into the tree. Soon, Bro Puss is sitting at ease in the branches with the bag of food.

At first, Dog doesn't understand what's happening. He's puzzled at what funny game Puss is playing and stands looking up into the tree.

Bro Puss looks down and calls, "I have lunch for you, Bro Dog. Come and get it."

"What d'you mean?" Dog says. "You know very well I can't get up there. And you must know my belly's rumbling."

"Anybody can climb up," Puss says, "Anybody who's not frightened."

Dog is shocked. Dog remembers using those words at the seaside. Dog looks down, thinking, "Oh! Puss is playing a game of teaching-a-lesson. Puss wants to trick me into seeing something!"

Dog is cross. Dog feels he has been tricked. He walks round the tree, looking up, and says, "Bring the food down, Bro Puss. You invite me to lunch. Come down with it."

Dog sees that Puss is sitting comfortably in the tree eating his lunch. Dog sits down. Dog thinks that he will wait just to attack Puss when he comes down and not bother with any of the food. But Dog is so empty it hurts. And Dog knows too, he cannot find it in himself to attack Puss and eat his food.

Suddenly Puss comes down from the tree and hands Dog his lunch.

Standing there, Dog takes his lunch, looking really cross with Puss. A wave of madness comes over him to attack Puss. But instead, an enticing smell of the cooked meat under his nose makes Dog want to eat more than attack Puss.

Dog sits down and gobbles up his lunch, not saying a single word.

"Have you got the point, Bro Dog?" Puss says. "Do you see now...that different people can do different things? And because different people can do different things we have much more between us. Birds can sing and frogs can croak. We have cow-mooing and jack-ass-braying. We have horse-galloping and kangaroo-jumping...Say you see the point Bro Dog. Come on...Some people can get about in water...Others can get up and around in a tree...Say you see my point. Say you see it!"

Dog finishes his lunch, gets up and says, "Bro Puss, if ever we are going to manage being friends, we better keep on the ground. And not in the sea or up in any tree. All right?"

Bro Dog walks away quickly by himself, going off in a huff.

From that time, cats and dogs keep trying to be friends.