

A Dog's Tail



By: Ananya

Illustrations: Ananya

Chapter One

“I feel bored!” said Benjy, a little impish puppy. “You’re right, I’m tired of chasing butterflies”. Replied his sister, Bonny. Just then, they heard a loud bark. “MOTHER!” they yelled joyfully and rushed to their mother, a big, strapping Labrador. Her name was Twinkle and she was owned by Mrs. and Mr. Kapur who were caring and kind and they lived in a big mansion. Twinkle was with a scruffy stray dog. She was giving some meat from her food bowl to the dog. “Thank you!” replied the dog. “Now I won’t have my poor little puppies whining anymore. Mother smiled and said, “Let me know if you want more food or water. I don’t want your puppies to die.” “You are very generous Miss!” The stray dog said and went back to the pavement where it lived, wagging its tail happily. “Mother, said Bonny. “Why did you have to give a scruffy old dog like that your share of meat? Won’t you feel hungry?” “Well, it is always important to be kind to anyone you meet. It doesn’t matter if they are a stray dog or a pet dog. Imagine the poor puppies starving! It is okay if I go without food for a night. You must treat all dogs like your brothers and sisters. Come, let me tell you a story which all dogs must know, about a stray dog and a pet dog.



Chapter two

“Wake up! We have to find food for ourselves.” A sharp poke on my back. “GET UP! I won’t go hungry for another day!” Paro screeched. Paro was my sister who was extremely shrewd, cunning and firm. She was a stout tawny dog with patches of chocolatey brown fur on her back. She had a bushy tail and fierce black eyes like blackberries. I woke up with a grunt and scratched myself on the back. Another long day of scavenging, I thought to myself. “Where are we going to forage for our food today?” I asked. “The Bazaar”. Paro replied promptly. “There was some sort of auditioning for carrots or whatever those humans called it yesterday.” “You mean auctioning” I corrected her. “Pooh! Don’t be such a know-it-all.” She replied scornfully. “We have already wasted enough time with your useless chatter. I’m really craving those juicy carrots! Move along, lazybones or the Bazaar dogs would have gobbled our food up”. I grumbled and followed Paro till the Bazaar. Today was a Sunday and there was no one in the Bazaar, as it was considered as a holiday for humans. Paro told me that a truck full of carrots got overturned, and humans didn’t care for carrots fallen on the road. We ate a few carrots with great relish and took some home. “I’m thirsty!” Paro moaned. “Let’s go to that pond nearby and get a drink of water.” I sighed. The pond was another two miles away. After an hour or so of walking, we reached the pond. Paro began drinking the water with great enthusiasm. I had a few sips myself. We reached home by evening and Paro dug a hole and buried the carrots. “Well, one or two carrots (dogs don’t bother counting beyond three) aren’t enough”. Paro declared. “Time for more scavenging!” I groaned. “Where are we going now? I can’t walk anymore!” I replied, aghast. “Fine, then don’t come with me. I’m going to gobble up all the carrots in the pit and the food I get now tomorrow. You have to scavenge for yourself.” Paro replied cheerfully. “Well, I’d rather do that!” I said. Paro shrugged and departed. I fell asleep.



Chapter three

“WAKE UP!” Paro shrieked. “Unh?” I said and got up. It was dawn. “There’s a famine in the village.” “You know what that means, don’t you?” “No more people!!!!” I shouted thankfully. “No silly dog!” Said Paro with a shove. “NO MORE FOOD!!!” She bellowed in my ear. “I’m not deaf, thank you” I replied stiffly. “Well, I’m deaf to your woes. This is OUR LAST AND FINAL day of scavenging. Understood?” Paro screamed. “It’s time we get a move on. Go faster! Don’t saunter!” We headed towards the Bazaar. Hordes of people, children, senior citizens and even animals like horses and donkeys were either running, packing their bags, braying, neighing, or piling bags into bullock carts. A group of children started throwing stones at us and chased us with sticks. I yelped in pain as a stone struck me on my leg. “Are you okay?” Paro whispered to me with concern. “My leg is hurting very badly. I think it is bleeding.” I replied. “You rest under this tree for some time. I’ll teach those boys a lesson they won’t forget!” Paro snarled. “No Paro! Don’t do anything dangerous!” I called out, knowing my sister’s violent streak. But too late. Paro ran at a big boy, who was clearly the head of the gang. A stick hurtled through the head and narrowly missed hitting Paro in the eye. Paro growled viciously and... bit the boy on his leg! The boy howled and it brought a number of villagers to the scene. “Run Paro!” I cried. She ran swiftly behind me and we stopped at a little abandoned hut near a forest far away from the village. “What’s that on your back?” I asked her. “Oh, remember I buried a few carrots yesterday? I got them in this sack. We can eat the carrots for dinner and I will tear this sack into two parts so we can use them as blankets for the night”. She answered. The carrots were a little stale, but we still ate them and I felt warm as a piece of lettuce in a sandwich with the sack wrapped around me as a blanket. “WAKE UP! Do you think I’m going to scavenge for both of us?” I groaned and woke up. I wish that I was a pet dog, being pampered and fussed over by my masters!



Chapter four

“Wake up Scooby! You lazy lump! Time for a morning walk”. Master bellowed and snatched me up from my “bed” made of an old cardboard box without flaps and with a thin, worn out piece of cloth inside. He brushed my fur roughly and it hurt so much that I whimpered. “Stop that awful noise at once!” Master yelled. He tied a leash around me very tightly, but I dared not whimper. He dragged me outside and slammed the door behind him. He buried his face in his phone (I really don’t know *why* humans are so fascinated with badgets or gadgets or whatever they call them) and dragged me along like I was a suitcase. Each time I wanted to stop, he whipped me. It soon started raining. Master hadn’t got an umbrella and I began to feel cold. He gave an exclamation of annoyance and dragged me back home. He was soaking wet and Mistress got him a towel to dry himself. This didn’t improve his mood a bit. He soon went for work and I was left with Mistress. Mistress was one of those women who liked watching Soap Operas and all those soppy shows on Television. Today she was watching a particularly soppy one, her eyes as large as saucers and glued to the screen. She was round and plump with a pasty face and two piggy eyes. She had a long, beaky nose. Her hair (which she dyed blonde) was like noodles and she wore an awful hat to top it off. Her head reminded me of an upturned bowl of spaghetti. I was feeling bored. The telephone suddenly rang and Mistress got up to answer it. I saw Mistress’s slippers and I chewed on it. I simply *love* chewing slippers. They have a lovely rubbery taste and the straps are nice to chew on. I’m sure the straps also strengthen my teeth. Suddenly I heard a loud crack like a gunshot and felt a stinging pain on my back. “YOU DISOBEDIENT, NAUGHTY DOG!” Mistress shouted. “Chewing my slippers like that!” Her face was like a thundercloud and her piggy eyes were almost popping out of her face. She locked me in the storeroom for the entire day. It was dark and dingy in there and my stomach was rumbling like crazy. Suddenly someone opened the door. “Oh, you poor, poor thing!” Mistress crooned. “I’m so sorry I locked you up!” I was feeling a bit muddled for this sudden love and affection towards me. Mistress gave a bowl of warm milk and some meat. Then I was covered in a warm blanket and put to sleep.

Chapter five

Today I found out the reason behind Master and Mistress's sudden kindness towards me. Let me tell you about it. It was a hazy day outside, almost as if the sun didn't want to wake up. I woke up unusually early to the sound of rain lashing the window like stones. I overheard what Master (let's call him Grouch) and Mistress (let's call her Spaghetti Head) were saying.

Grouch: ...Yes. Imagine the money we will make!

Spaghetti Head: We could train her to do some tricks and we can make her participate in a dog show and then we could ship her off to a circus!

A note from me: There was a dog show in town and whichever dog performed the best would get a bag of Mr. Tollydoggie's Strengthening Dog Food for Pups and Dogs, *give them one bowlful a day, keep the vet away!* And the dog's owner would get ₹10,000 as a cash prize!

Grouch: A great idea, I must say. We can go on a holiday!

Spaghetti Head: That dog is nothing but a little nuisance... Too bad we can't whip it anymore.

Grouch: Where's that pen? I'll fill in that form for signing up to the dog show.



Here's the form, for your benefit. P.S. I took a sneak peek at it after Grouch woke me up.

Dog Show

Fill the following form to enroll your dog in the dog show.

Breed: Chihuahua

Owner's name and Signature: Brij Kapadia

Sign: Brij S. Kapadia

Name of the dog: Scooby

Diet: Meat of the best quality, Pedigree, fresh milk

Weight: 4.5 kgs

Any illnesses: -nil-

Please choose from the options given below.

Adopted

Store bought ✓

*Please note: Dogs without collars (name **MUST** be printed/written on the collar) will **NOT BE ACCEPTED.***

Read the form? I didn't understand a word of it so it didn't matter to me much. But what *did* matter to me was training for the dog show. A dog show might be fun, exciting and all that for humans, but it's a traumatic and horrid experience for a dog. Maybe humans think dogs find it fun performing tricks and getting prizes and a huge round of applause. But *it's not at all fun for any dog*. Why should we be made to stand on our heads and juggle balls? Why should we stand on two legs and twirl hula hoops? Dogs aren't meant for those things. We too are living creatures, who breathe, eat and have feelings and emotions. We thought and still think that humans are our companions and friends whom we can love and trust. But look at the stray dogs on the road. People throw stones at them, beat them etc. "Scooby Dear!! Time for training for the dog show!" Mistress cooed. "Go to the backyard. Master is waiting for you!" I ran to the backyard.

Grouch (master) was there with balls, hoops and a long wooden box. “So, today I will teach you how to juggle.” He said. “Lie down on your back! Here are two balls. Let’s see how you juggle with them. Pass the ball to the next leg and so on. Ready? Start! No, no, no, no! Not simultaneously. I said *one ball at a time*. Faster! That’s not how you juggle!” He barked. He made me practice it again and again and again. *Whew*. I finally got it right. Grouch nodded approvingly. “Now we will see what you can do with four balls. And.... START!” I tried to juggle my best with four balls. “Hmmm... not bad. You are juggling pretty well. Now you will juggle with six balls!” Juggling with six balls was extremely tough. The balls suddenly slipped through my paws and fell to the ground. “Aaargh! How can we proceed if you can’t juggle with six balls? Try again” Suddenly there was a shriek from the living room. Master rushed into the house. Mistress was lying on the couch, her face a chalk white colour and she was gasping and spluttering. Master turned pale and rushed to the telephone. “My wife. Critically ill. It’s an emergency. Come immediately!!” I heard him say anxiously. What happened next was a blur. I heard sirens wailing, Master carrying Mistress and putting her into the ambulance and someone grabbing me and holding me in their arms. “What should we do about this dog sir?” I heard the person holding me say. “The dog... keep it with you, Varun. We have a more serious problem to deal with.” I heard a tall, burly man say. “Give that dog to me and supervise the ambulance. Make sure everything goes smoothly.” Varun handed me over to the burly man and sped off. “Well old girl, your Mistress is seriously ill. Stay with me for now. Don’t feel scared!” He whispered to me softly. Varun returned with a message from Master. “Mithun sir, a message from the dog's owner.”

Here's the note:

Dear Mithun sir, the ambulance has reached Suraksha Hospital, the hospital closest to our house. How is Scooby? Please give her to our neighbour as I'm going to stay in the Hospital tonight. Can you please feed her before dropping her to the neighbour's house? Her food is in the kitchen, long wooden cupboard, top shelf.

Brij S. Kapadia

Mr. Mithun read the note and put it in his pocket. “Varun, you can leave. I’ll give the dog its food and drop it at the neighbour’s house”. Mr. Mithun went to the kitchen and rummaged in the wooden cupboard for my food. Then he found a packet of Pedigree, some Dog Treats and filled a bowl with some water. I guzzled my meal quickly. Then he rummaged in the house a little more and found Mistress’s old bathrobe and wrapped me in it and dropped me at our neighbour Mr. Ravikumar’s house along with Master’s note. Mr. Ravikumar had a dog himself, Rex. Rex was a Golden Retriever. Rex and I played for some time. “Time for bed both of you! It’s 9 O’ clock. Come along Scooby, you can sleep in Rex’s old bed. He used to sleep in it when he was a puppy.” Mr. Ravikumar said and put me in Rex’s old bed. I felt as snug as a bug in a rug in Rex’s old bed. Sometime at dawn I suddenly woke up. Mr. Ravikumar was talking on the phone with somebody. I strained my ears and found out that Mr. Ravikumar was talking to Master! This is what they were saying:

Master: The Doctor said the air here doesn’t suit my wife, Vinita and I have to move abroad, somewhere close to the sea. I have booked Air Tickets to Kerala and we are leaving today. You can keep the dog. I’ve written to the authorities and told them that Scooby is now rightfully yours. Take good care of her!

Mr. Ravikumar: Thank you Brij! I’m sure Scooby will enjoy playing with Rex. I will take good care of her, that I promise. Hope Vinita gets well soon! Have a nice time in Kerala. Goodbye!

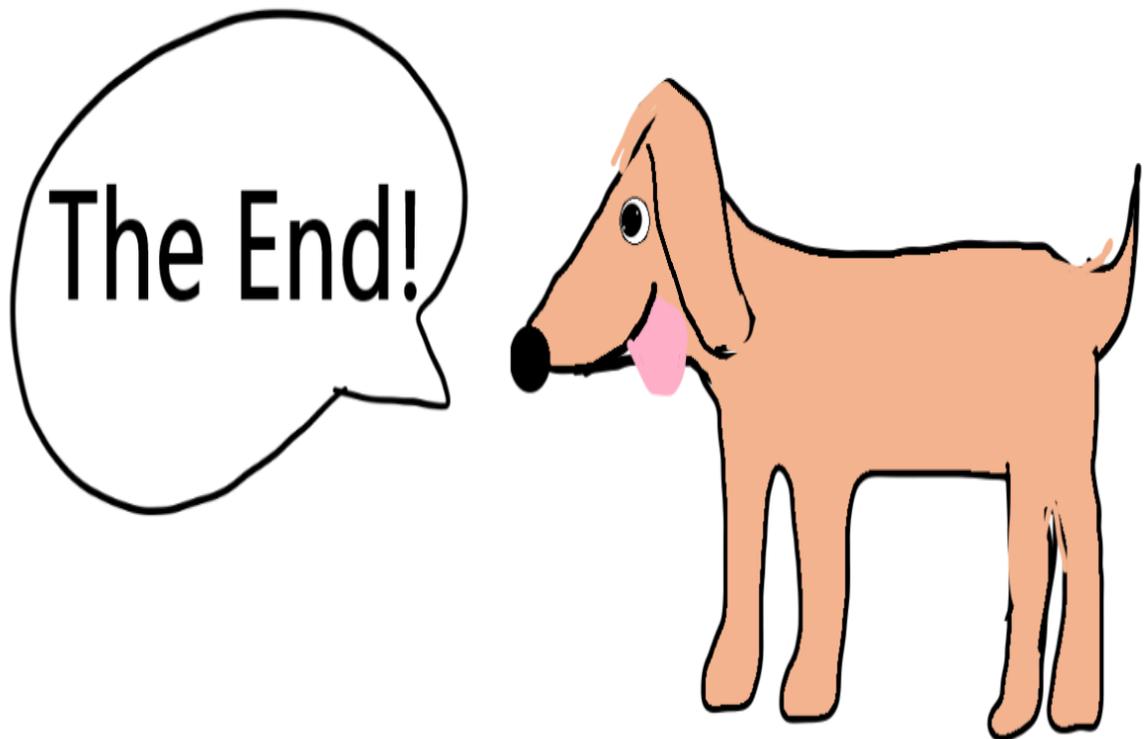
Master: Goodbye and good luck!

Mr. Ravikumar woke both of us up. “Well Scooby, I’m your new master now. How do you feel about that?” I jumped with joy and licked my new Master’s hand. Woohoo!

Even though my new master was kind, caring and gentle, there was still one thing I missed- Freedom. Master was a busy man and he used to go on Business Trips often. We stay locked up in the house with enough food and water whenever Master travels abroad. “Woof! Woof! Scooby, are you coming to play or not? Come quickly!” That’s Rex calling me. No time to sit here brooding over my thoughts! “Coming Rex!”

Chapter Six

“So now did you understand the importance of kindness? This is how dogs are actually treated. You should be grateful that we have loving owners, enough food and water and plenty of space to run around and play.” Said mother to Benjy and Bonny. “Mother, will you allow us to play with that scruffy dog’s puppies?” asked Benjy. “Of course, Benjy! Don’t call that dog ‘Scruffy dog’. Her name is Veena. Run along and play with the puppies.” “YAY! C’mon Bonny! Let’s play!” Mother smiled as she watched her puppies playing merrily. She was happy that they finally understood the *real* life of a dog.

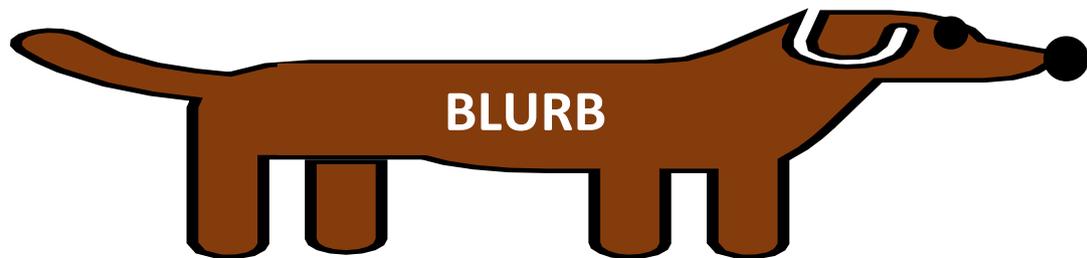


About the Author:



Ananya is a student of grade 4 in NPS, Koramangala. She is a kind and affectionate child with varied interests. Her hobbies are reading, painting and gardening. Her other interests include looking up various religions when she has some spare time. The one thing she never tires of though is just lazing around in bed!

She has a soft corner for animals and would like to become a veterinarian when she grows up.



Benjy and Bonny are two puppies who don't understand kindness and gratitude. They discriminate stray dogs and other dogs. So, their mother narrates a story about the life of a stray dog and pet dog on how they are actually treated.

This book is about how dogs and other animals suffer and how human beings mistreat them. This story is through a dog's eyes and it is sure to touch your heart. Happy reading!