



Puppy Tails

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By time Doodle Dog arrived home to the office he still hadn't figured out why a bunny has a fuzzy cotton ball puff of a tail instead of a long, thin swishy one like a horse or a stiff, bristly one like a squirrel. Nor had he answered the question when he found his room and padded across the vast carpet between the doorway and his bed, even softer and more cottony than that bunny's tail. And even when he snuggled in to his warm blanket, which helped easily unravel the problem of how to scare away any chilly air with its cozy threads, the floppy-eared puppy had yet to solve the original mystery at paw with hardly any clues at all to give him a starting point on the trail.

Nuzzling his nose deep in the squishy fabric and burrowing his body into its seemingly unending folds, just Doodle Dog's ears and then his eyes peeked out over the edge of the doggie bed. And there, in perfect view of his lower-level gaze, were all his favorite stories on their special shelves in his special bookcase. Doodle Dog knew there were lots of detectives that solved many mysteries in the tales kept in books and he bet that would be the best place to look! The little floppy-eared puppy may not be able to yet figure out the problem in reality, but maybe, just maybe if he momentarily stepped into another world it would help him look at it differently enough to find just the right solution. It was certainly worth a try!

Though he didn't much like the thought of extracting himself from the comfy covers of his bed, Doodle Dog slowly stepped out of the cushion bit by bit so not just his ears and eyes could be seen now. Letting this mystery go unsolved would be more frustrating than simply switching locations for a little while! So soon, bit by bit, his neck, shoulders, back, one paw and then two and then the rest of him followed as he flopped on the rug in front of his fantastical friends, flipping his tail for good measure over the front of his toes. At least they would stay warm! Gently pulling one book and then another from the shelf and making sure they plopped carefully on the rug, Doodle Dog nudged open the pages until he found the place with the pictures of the extra-smart sleuths, dashing detectives and even some gawky gumshoes. Strange, they didn't look like shoes covered in gum... they looked like humans - normal people with funny hats holding magnifying glasses which made their eyes quite huge!

First Doodle Dog pretended he was a doggie detective too by considering what he knew. He thought of the animals he'd already encountered like the horse, squirrel and bunny. Then he thought of other animals he hadn't seen recently

but was familiar with all the same. Sharing the barnyard with the horse would be a real sheep (not just the stallion pretending!) mostly white with a dark face, darker legs and a short bob of a black tail. That tail was the same size and length of a bunny's but definitely not the same color and it wasn't fluffy like a cotton ball! Even more different was the horse's other neighbor nosing around a trough of a smaller fenced-in area. The plump, pink pig's tail curled around itself, boinging up and down. Doodle Dog wouldn't try it, but he bet if someone tugged on the tail it would spring right back to where it had been. These were all short, stubby tails but the floppy-eared puppy knew he had forest friends with much longer, larger tails too. He considered the creatures living in the stream like the fishies swimming to and fro with tiny fins to steer them along. A bigger version of the fins served as a tail, poking out from the back and helping the fish float with the current to stay on track. And he couldn't forget one of his favorite friends foraging along the riverbed for branches and twigs that it would use to build a wall and make a little waterfall. Looking very much like a groundhog that liked to swim, the beaver's tail was more different than any real animal Doodle Dog had usually seen; wide and flat it was perfect for splashing in the water with a wet SMACK! Then up in the trees of the forest, little birdies would chirp and as they hopped from branch to branch their tails, flat like a beaver's but full of short feathers, would flit right along with them. And when it grew too dark among the leaves and bark and most of the animals tucked in to sleep, Doodle Dog knew a very special sort of friends would come out to light the night. One by one the fireflies twinkled through the twigs, zipping here and there, making the sky glow with a trail that looked like a sort of tail that he'd only seen in books about comets.

After a few moments of perusing the pages, the floppy-eared puppy paused on a paragraph next to a particularly peculiar pose. The person appeared to be poised ready to pounce upon or be pounced on by a mythological creature that resembled the horse from the pasture but with the ability to fly! A painted pegasus with its wings and swishy tail could travel through the air just like the dragon drawn next to it but without the dangerous scaly point like a triangle at the end of a garden hose!

By the end of his pile of books, Doodle Dog was no closer to figuring out why their tails were different, but it didn't matter - he loved his friends all the same. Maybe that's just the way their stories were written!