



Puppy Tails

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*As the moon goes to bed, the sun comes up
And here we meet a sleepy pup,
Who was walking through G-ville one bright sunny
day,
Then saw The Villager and decided to stay.*

From the edge of the red and white blanket, Doodle Dog watched his favorite kind of humans splashing in the slight surf at the edge of the shore. As much fun as he was having listening to stories and snacking on yummys, the floppy-eared puppy couldn't very well spend all afternoon on the blanket, especially being that he was still in the middle of a goopy mess. A very tasty, frosty, creamy mess, but a sticky, slimy, icky mess all the same. It had been fun for a moment or two, but Doodle Dog did not quite wish to stay covered in this concoction that made him appear as though a vanilla volcano erupted all over his fur. Licking the tips of his paws only worked so well because soon his tongue became just as sticky as his toes and he found the more he tried to get clean, the more he was actually getting gooey! The melty ice cream drops started to turn a bit gummy as they mixed with the fuzzy flecks on his feet and, well, it was NOT what the floppy-eared puppy had in mind when he thought maybe he would try a new look for summer! This was definitely a fashion faux "paw" of puppy proportions! Doodle Dog certainly didn't want to commit such a canine crime, even if it was of the yummy confectionary kind, so he wondered how he could get himself out of the – quite actual – sticky situation.

There! A very simple solution to his current condition shone in front of him by the form of the sprawling, shimmering lake where the little humans splashed and scampered. As their toes swished in the ripples, it appeared they had the right idea to get un-sticky! Splashing and scampering are what the floppy-eared puppy does best so not another moment went by before Doodle Dog decided to join in the fun. As his paws swished in the ripples, the spaces between his toes loosened and the clumps in his fur disappeared. Dozens of boys and girls were scampering, splashing, swimming and shrieking with delight as gentle waves washed over them. Skipping over the ripples, the little red wagon boy was now leading something other than a pile of books. Several children danced and pranced along beside and behind him as he made his way down the shore to the far end of the lake, his bare feet leaving a trail of toe prints in the sand as he went, toe prints which were soon joined by those of the other children and then the paw prints of one very curious – and now considerably cleaner! – floppy-eared puppy. At the curve of shore just up ahead, Doodle Dog could now see what everyone was excitedly approaching. A wide ladder, which really more resembled a series of steps, reached up from a solid, sturdier piece of ground off to the side of the sandy bank spread under their feet. And, at the tippy top of the staircase ladder, a length of colorful lumber stuck out like a long, flat limb jutting out of a tree. The little boy immediately scurried up the sturdy rungs and balanced on the protruding panel, his small feet light tan against the bright orange overhanging from the ladder. Doodle Dog couldn't help but think the diving board resembled a flattened traffic cone that hadn't jumped out of a bicycle's way in time. He also couldn't help thinking that he generally avoided objects that reminded him to take caution!

Despite the friendly child beginning to bounce up and down on it, that diving board did not appear very welcoming to the curious but cautious floppy-eared

puppy. As the other children scrambled up the ladder to watch the boy take his leap into the liquidy lagoon below, Doodle Dog preferred the view from right where his paws were planted. He could see plenty from right there on the safe shore.

But as the brave little boy went to the very end of the diving board, wrapping his toes over the edge, and bounced once, then twice, the floppy-eared puppy watched first in fright, then in anticipation and awe when the boy's toes left the platform, then excitement as he splashed in, and then finally in eager delight while waiting for the jumper to resurface. The onlookers cheered from their various positions on the platform, the ladder or on the ground waiting to climb up themselves. One by one the group thinned out as its members took turns scrambling, springing and splashing. Soon the floppy-eared puppy was the only one not swimming.

The children in the water called out to Doodle Dog, encouraging him to try the dive himself. Several pets dove with their humans: a Golden Lab had already taken the plunge and was now happily chasing a small ball as it bobbed up and down in the wrinkly waves and a very wet German Shepherd shook itself dry after returning to the shore right next to the floppy-eared puppy. Doodle Dog knew if he was going to try it, this was his chance. If he waited too long, everyone would be tired of splashing around and he'd be all by himself at the top of the ladder! Eep!

Taking a deep breath, he put one front paw on the bottom rung of the staircase ladder, then his next front paw and then finally his two back paws cautiously followed. Rung by rung, one at a time, one paw then the next and then the rest, the floppy-eared puppy climbed. When he reached the top, he didn't bounce out to the board right away like the little wagon boy, but instead stopped to look out over the lake and the treetops surrounding it. Then he took a deeper breath and slowly scooted paw by paw, inch by inch along the traffic cone-colored beam. This must be what it's like to walk the pirate plank! Doodle Dog imagined all the sea stories he read with sleek ships and salty air. A swift wind made him shiver as he went to the very end of the diving board and wrapped his paws over the edge, his claws digging in slightly while he convinced himself to take the path between holding on tightly and letting go to fly in the air. Taking his deepest breath of all, the floppy-eared puppy bounced once... then twice... and ... SPLASH!

The onlookers cheered from their various spots in the surf and on the shore as Doodle Dog resurfaced and swam to the water's edge. Doggie paddling? Now that's something he can do quite well!