



Puppy Tails

MIALIE T. SZYMANSKI | CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Bark bark bark! Woof! Ruff! Arrrrrrfrfrfrfrfrfrff!

What was all that noise? Doodle Dog pattered down the sidewalk wondering if he should go any farther in his curiosity. Although he had enjoyed the peace and relative calm of the cozy office, the floppy-eared puppy had been cooped up too long indoors and couldn't wait to get outside for some fresh air even if that air was still a bit nippy. But now with all the commotion seemingly too near for comfort, Doodle Dog thought perhaps he'd ventured out too soon! The soft blanket of snow that covered the world in tranquility had been melting steadily over the last few days and with it had dissolved the quiet sleepy haze surrounding the town. Everyone was out and about! Doodle Dog dashed between townspeople hustling and bustling through the streets and soon he was at his favorite meadow where there were no fast cars and no noisy roads to cross. There were, however, noisy yips and yaps that sounded even louder than the first time Doodle Dog heard them. Instead of escaping in the other direction as he'd hoped, the floppy-eared puppy was heading right toward the roaring! What was causing such a ruckus?

At the edge of the meadow near where the forest begins and the grassy knoll ends, a little brown dog jumped up and down very excitedly, yipping and yapping with each up and each down. Next to it, so near there was no daylight between them, was a not-so-little dog with a golden coat with its long nose pointed down at the ground while it barked and barked and barked. Then next to that dog was a large black dog growling and arfing and woofing at whatever the other two dogs were making their noises at too. And then, next to the larger black dog was an even larger dog whose coat had so many different colors of fur that Doodle Dog couldn't tell if it was brown or golden or black or maybe just a really dark shade of tan. It really didn't matter to Doodle Dog what the furry circle looked like – what mattered was how loud they were being, and the largest dog was being the noisiest with its ruffing that echoed off the trees lining the edge of the

meadow. Now Doodle Dog knew what was making the sounds, but that only brought a new mystery: what was causing them to be so noisy?!

The little floppy-eared puppy crept closer and closer and cautiously hid behind a thick tree trunk to watch. From his hiding place he couldn't figure out what the dogs were sniffing and barking at, but there were only two choices if Doodle Dog really wanted to find out: do what the princess did with the noisy dragon and go right on up and give them a hug OR be patient and see what happened. Doodle Dog decided the second option was the best for now and soon enough the little yappy dog tired out from all that jumping and went home, then the golden dog with the long nose sniffed up some dirt and sneezed its way out of the meadow. The large black dog soon growled and arfed and woofed itself hoarse – Doodle Dog watched as it went in search of a drink of water from the pond.

The last dog was still ruffing at something in the ground, but Doodle Dog figured he was brave enough or maybe just not patient enough to wait any longer and made his way over to see what had so many animals' attention. He followed the large dog's gaze down to the ground where there was a little dent in the earth filled with leaves and grass and twigs. The hole was covered up enough by strong twigs that the dogs could not get at what was inside but shallow enough that Doodle Dog could see curled up was a brown baby bunny with a fuzzy puff of white for a tail. Hello there, fellow floppy-eared friend! Its long, skinny ears wrapped around it so that all Doodle Dog could see was a tiny little furry ball nestled in the green of the leaves and grass. Doodle Dog gently nudged the large dog out of the way to get a closer look at the itty bitty creature, trembling in fright from the loud barking that had been pointed in its direction. Bored now that its partners in crime had left for their own distractions, the brown or gold or black or tan dog stopped its growling and went off to find something else to do. Once all was quiet, the little bunny uncurled its body and unfurled its floppy ears, then with a quick hop bounded out of the nest and into the forest. The floppy-eared puppy followed at first but then, just as quickly, the tiny brown ball of fluff disappeared into a twiggy, leafy, grassy gap dug into the mossy earth. Going down that rabbit hole would be another adventure for another day entirely.