



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.*

His new scarf wrapped warmly around his neck, Doodle Dog bounded out the office door and off the porch stoop to greet the not-so-chilly-anymore afternoon. The soft, colorful fabric stretched out behind him as the wind blew this way and that while the little floppy-eared puppy dashed that way and this on his way to spend the rest of the day at the park. Even though the dusting of sugary snow remained on the sidewalks, tracks of humans and animals alike had spread out the fluff and flattened the rest of the foamy mess so that it wasn't really all that difficult to manage the path through town now, even for one with such little paws.

Doodle Dog wasted no time scampering from one neighborhood to the next, faintly paying attention to the smattering of holiday decorations still gleaming from their various spots, and made quick work of the distance from his home to what had become quite possibly one of his very



favorite places to play. A tall swing set, its long bars white with misty snowflakes, came into view at the top of a nearby hill. Clumps of ice sat solid and heavy on the bendy rubber seats curved under the temporary weight, a few stray frosty lumps forming piles where the footprints of the floppy-eared puppy's favorite humans would be once springtime came again. For now, the brightly painted spinner-go-round appeared nearly frozen to the ground, unusually still in its place among the playground's toys and nearby the sleek silver slide seemed even slipperier as its smooth surface shone in the snow-reflected sunlight. Handmade snowmen, round and stout, were scattered around the landscape like very stiff sentinels standing guard around the playground palace. The little floppy-eared puppy slipped by them all, careful not to disturb their lookout duties!

Just past the twisting jungle gyms with their tangle of metal loops and perplexing puzzles, the field next to the playground spread out under Doodle Dog's paws. Though the rest of the area still had evidence that winter very much continued to touch this corner of town, the field itself had been brushed clean of snow. On one end of the green square, big humans and little humans huddled way down low together in animated conversation planning out how to kick off the afternoon's event. And on the other side, just over the grassy knoll, Doodle Dog looked way up high to see his scarf waving at him from up above in the tree top like a friendly flag greeting the forest's inhabitants. The breeze blew a bit harder and his new scarf tugged on his neck, almost as if waving right back in reply. With a skip in his step, the little floppy-eared puppy scampered over to see what the humans were doing and wiggled his way right into the middle of the huddle.

Soon mixed teams of humans in all shapes and sizes and their dogs in all shapes and sizes too gathered at separate positions around the playing area. Each human player had a colorful strip sticking out of a pocket and each canine companion had a similar stripe somewhere in its fur. These strips of flags resembled Doodle Dog's scarf a bit but they were solid in color, slightly longer and not nearly as wide. Some flags were carefully tucked in collars, others gently tied around the tips of tails. One of the smaller humans helped the floppy-eared puppy carefully wrap a brilliant lime green swatch to match his group. Doodle Dog's tail twitched making the handkerchief float like a kite being pulled behind him or the sail of a pirate ship announcing his arrival. Maybe it would give him some extra speed!

As the green players took their places opposite those with perky pink pennants, the bright fabric tails stood out, manmade neon against the natural backdrop of bark, leaves, grass and snow. While he waited, Doodle Dog picked his paws up one and then the other to keep them warm as even though the snow was gone, the emerald carpet underneath was crunchy and cold. A whistle blew through the chilly air and off they went! The big dogs were very good at charging right on down the field while even the little dogs were doing quite well ducking under the larger players to get to the other side. Back and forth they went, up and down the field trying to work together and escort a large blue ball that looked more like a stretched out egg to the goal line at each end. A little Pug with pink in its collar jumped up to snatch the green flag from the back pocket of one of the big humans and a larger dog with a soft golden coat playfully belly-flopped on the field, taking the Pug down with it while a long-legged Dalmatian nipped its rosy streamer and ran off with it instead of the ball! One by one the players were out of the game until suddenly the football sailed right over Doodle Dog's floppy ears on its way from one player to another. The little puppy leapt up and caught the squishy football in his mouth, chomping down on what seemed like the mini mounds of melted mush but more spongy and springy. Quickly he crouched into a roll, tumbling by a group of people and pets trying to block the path. Darting this way and that, Doodle Dog twisted and turned, tucking down with the ball firmly clenched between his teeth. Swiftly changing direction, the floppy-eared puppy swerved, skittering right between the ankles of a towering player ready to tackle him to reach the goal line. Touchdown!