



Puppy Tails

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Luckily while Doodle Dog slept, a gentle rain came during the night and washed most all of the mess off the now-shiny-again blue car. Almost all of the mess that is as if someone looked close enough they just might see the shadow of the tiniest paw print and the residue of mud that shaped it hiding to the side of the back bumper. But since if you didn't know it was there you probably wouldn't know it was there, the little floppy-eared puppy's secret was certainly safe. He could see the exact spot from his curled up perch on his favorite cushion on the porch, but that clue would be just for him. The ping, ping of the last few raindrops on the roof of the porch stirred Doodle Dog from his snoring and the sunrise just beginning to peek over the tops of the houses woke him a little more.

It had been a while since Doodle Dog was up this early in the morning, but since he was, he might as well enjoy this time of day too! As he scampered, slowly at first, down the porch steps, the sun began its climb higher into the sky, a tail of soft pinks, mild orange hues and even an assortment of brilliant blues almost as shiny as the car in the driveway trailed behind the golden ball as it steadily rose. A tail of fluffy fur in varying shades of tan, beige and even a smattering of subtle black trailed behind the curious puppy as he steadily pattered along the sidewalk with nowhere in particular on his mind, but knowing exactly where he was going all the same. Doodle Dog knew this time of year, when the sun was just about that position in the sky that it was on its way to be in today, the fields next to his favorite meadow held a very special surprise, so the floppy-eared puppy meandered that way to see if just perhaps he could find it today.

Sure enough, as his steps went from the clackety clack of his claws on the solid dry concrete sidewalk to the squishy pattering of his paws sinking into the flexible grass of the meadow, still slightly damp from the dawn dew, Doodle Dog's gaze shifted immediately to the fields beyond the knolls where several people were working as quickly as they could before the heat of the day caught up to them. Even from where he sat up on the top of the knoll nearest to those fields, the floppy-eared puppy could see the teeny spots of red hiding under rows and rows of squat green bushes. One by one the bigger humans reached under a bush and a moment later withdrew a hand now filled with bright summer strawberries. Hand by hand the berries steadily packed waiting baskets that were then carried along by some of Doodle Dog's favorite little humans as they joined their families for a day of fun picking berries together.

Soon the floppy-eared puppy no longer perched on the top of the knoll but now ducked under one of the squat bushes right in the center of the strawberry field. A summer rainstorm is good for washing paw prints off of cars but it also helps Mother Nature to grow fields of fruit and, seeing how delicious all those berries looked, Doodle Dog could only imagine how many rainstorms had watered these lands! The packed down dirt of a narrow lane between the plants provided a soft place for the humans to rest and a little girl sitting on the path next to him giggled as the bush near her wiggled on its own and then the puppy emerged, temporarily looking like he had leaves for a coat instead of fur. As the little girl started back to her task, Doodle Dog followed her, working on the line opposite hers by gently biting the stem of each berry and tugging until it freed from the bush. He let it drop into a nearby bucket and then crouched down to hide behind the bush that was just barely the right height for hiding. When the little girl caught up to where he had stopped, the floppy-eared puppy popped up and barked a friendly bark making her laugh with surprise. Unfortunately, the movement startled her as well and the pile of berries she carried in her shirt scattered over the dry dirt, rolling under the bushes and skittering down the line. Oh no! One by one, Doodle Dog helped nudge each berry to the bucket and then nudged the bucket itself along the row as the little girl cleaned each bush of its red dots, dropping them with a gentle plop, plop, on top of the ones already in the bucket.

Halfway down the row with several more bushes to go, Doodle Dog paused to take a break and the little girl plunked gleefully on the ground next to him. Taking one of the recently-deposited red objects that resembled balls with pinched bottoms, she squeezed the tiny green stem between her fingers and bit into the berry, careful not to let the juice fall down her chin. Mmmmm! It smelled so

delicious from over there! Doodle Dog wondered if he should try one too and his curiosity and that wonderful summery scent won out as the little girl held one near his nose for him. A quick nip of the berry between his teeth and it disappeared down to his tummy, yummy and yummiest all the way it went! Mmmmm. He'd better not eat too many of the sweets though or there might be a grumbling in his tummy instead!

Working together, the curious little puppy and the sweet little girl spent the rest of the morning topping off the baskets and buckets with the beautiful berries and when they were done, Doodle Dog gently carried an extra-full basket back to the farm at the other side of the field while the other workers loaded the rest of the harvest into wagons. Little did he know, some of the dirt under his claws had mixed with juicy drops and the bottoms of his paws were all stained with strawberries! Maybe he would find a puddle to walk through on the way home because as the sun shone high in the sky, there was no rainstorm to wash away the new mess and if he tracked it into the office, this time he would be caught red-pawed!