



Puppy Tails

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Growing a wee bit tired from all the pattering around town in the quest for yummy snacks, Doodle Dog was still having so much fun that he didn't notice the sky around him was growing a wee bit darker. He knew he should get home soon and could hurry to make it back to the office before the stars came out to light the night, but for now the floppy-eared puppy figured it would be okay to meander just a wee bit longer since there were still plenty of children out and about scampering this way and that way too.

Waddling along in his cotton-candy cloud-sheep snowball-giant dust bunny-misty fog sort of getup, Doodle Dog's floppy ears perked up at the sound of little feet racing behind him. A pint-sized fairy princess hurried along, her glittering wings flapping in the wind created by her dashing and her tiny toes trying unsuccessfully not to trip on the long hem of her silky dress. One misstep and her skirt caught on the tip of her foot and caused her to fall flat on her elbows, the dainty pail in her hand falling to the ground and most of the candy inside it flittering briefly in the air before skittering across the sidewalk. Oh no! Her petite crown followed the route of the candy, slipping off the top of her brown curls and flinging itself more than a few feet down the street. A nearby streetlamp starting to glow for evening glinted off the tiny tiara marking its silvery trail.

As the sky grew darker, the air around the pair grew thicker as though a cloud much bigger than Doodle Dog was settling over the town. The floppy-eared puppy didn't want the little fairy princess to get lost in the fog, so he did his

best to dart over – as well as a waddling whatever-he-was could dart – to her rescue. Even in the translucent cover of the misty surroundings, Doodle Dog could hear the very beginnings of a scared snuffle and just as tiny tears started to sparkle in the corners of her eyes, the floppy-eared puppy nudged the little fairy's hand with his gentle nose, the cloud fur brushing up against her arm in comfort. Once the fluffy cotton candy-like dust bunny fuzz tickled her skin it made her giggle and Doodle Dog knew she would be just fine, so he went to track down her crown and nudged her candy back into her satin pouch piece by piece. As she stood up and brushed off her dress, the floppy-eared puppy nosed around her, circling once to check her ankles and again to check her knees until he was sure nothing was twisted or broken or otherwise unusual looking, at least from the little puppy's level. The bumbling dust bunny bumped this way and that, encouraging the little fairy princess to walk along with him and together they would make it home.

It's not TOO scary, Doodle Dog thought... though it was nearly twilight the two continued along quite happily enjoying a slow pace so there would be no more tumbles and only giggles as the fairy kept trying to pet the floppy-eared puppy's fur and wound up with more fluffy fuzz in her hand every time. The wind had picked up a wee bit with the approaching nighttime and bits of the curious puppy's costume constantly floated this way and that way down the sidewalk from where they had just been and up the street where they were about to be. No, not too scary at all... Doodle Dog even saw something colorful waving up ahead – a lot of somethings in fact! A bunch of balloons like the ones he saw from the carnival were floating in the wind like the tiny tufts of fluff from his cotton cloud cushion costume. They looked friendly enough, with their pretty purples and bright

blues and yellows so cheerful they looked like a bouquet of tiny sunshines tied together. They looked friendly enough... but then the breeze blew the balloons to the side and revealed the person behind them. Eep!

The person wasn't a person at all but someone who seemed ten feet tall with pasty blank powder where the face should be, neon pink discs for cheeks and crazy orange hair like the goop that comes out of the inside of a pumpkin. Decorated from head to feet in stiff ruffles and multi-colored stripes, the creature's costume was as mismatched as could be. That was the scariest thing of all on the sidewalk! But then the not-person took off its bright red nose that made Doodle Dog think of Rudolph the Reindeer and gave it a quick squeeze to make it squeak just like one of the floppy-eared puppy's favorite chewy toys! Without his glowing nose, Doodle Dog could imagine what the man looked like behind the red round spot, beyond the chalky white cheeks and beneath the unkempt pouf of hair. The not-so-scary clown-man stooped down with one hand still holding the balloons and the other hand in his pocket. Soon Doodle Dog could smell a whiff of pumpkin biscuit and an instant later he could see the doggie treat gently held between the clown-man's fingers. The floppy-eared puppy gave it a curious sniff to make sure it really did smell okay to eat, and then he took a little nibble that was really a great big bite. Yum! While Doodle Dog enjoyed his snack, the man took his now-free hand and untangled a bright yellow balloon from the bunch, handing the tiny sun to the little girl standing cautiously next to the little puppy. And with that, the fairy princess and her guard dog made their way down the street, tugging the brilliant sunny bauble bouncing in the air behind them. Doodle Dog was definitely glad he hadn't hurried home and was able to lend a helping paw on Halloween!