



Puppy Tails

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People and pets pattered in the playground park where long, thin tables had been set up for the day. As Doodle Dog pattered near, he could see the petite paint pots placed here and there on the table tops, their bright colors tempting passersby like brilliantly-hued candy displayed just-so in the shop windows on the main street of town. The wind swept by in a peaceful breeze, fluttering flimsy plastic fabric draped down over the sides of the work spaces to protect the surfaces and the participants once the fun began. And Doodle Dog's favorite humans, the little children of the town, excitedly gathered around as the time to start was almost here!

The floppy-eared puppy found a place at an empty table with plenty of space and soon several children surrounded him, their gleeful giggles dancing on the now more enthusiastic gusts of air. He certainly wasn't alone now! Within another moment, a few adults directed each table one by one to an area off to the side of the crafting spots where freshly-picked piles of pumpkins perched. The children didn't hesitate to disappear among the sea of seemingly endless orange with its little drops of green poking up here and there and soon each one emerged holding his or her pulp-filled prize: a mostly large, mostly round, mostly orange pumpkin that would not stay so for long. A few pets weren't quite ready to leave the portable pumpkin patch, entertained by some of the smaller choices that appeared to have minds of their own while they rolled from spot to spot and hid from sight just as an artist approached. Doodle Dog joined another puppy with a golden coat as it chased a particularly sneaky pumpkin, helping to corner it and keep it from getting away! Quickly finding his own just-right canvas, Doodle Dog set to work nudging it from the patch to the ground next to the table and once he arrived, a little girl took her own pumpkin off the plastic where it had been placed and plopped it – and herself – there onto the grass to work beside the floppy-eared puppy. Comfortably crossing her legs to almost look like butterfly wings, she settled into position and arranged her supplies.

While the other children, their materials still spread out above the pair, splattered paint in abstract patterns in the general direction of the pumpkin, letting whatever random bits the canvas caught provide the end product, the little girl gently picked up a small, finely-tipped brush and daintily dipped it in the blue hue nearest her knee. Concentrating as hard as she could, she carefully touched the very point of the brush to the front of her pumpkin, drawing her hand this way and that in what didn't really appear to be any particular way, but soon something DID

appear: a friendly face with wide eyes, a simple smile and the faintest outline of a nose right in the middle. In just a few strokes, the little artist created magic with her paintbrush wand! Wiping the brush clean on a scrap piece of cloth, the girl then chose another color, this time a pretty pink the shade of petals on spring posies. Its delicate tone brought a bit of light to the darker, more solid blue parts. Doodle Dog had never seen a face that was blue and pink, but then again he didn't see orange faces except for Halloween time either. It was as though the pumpkin was getting its own costume for the occasion just like the Trick-or-Treaters who would be dressing up and wandering through town soon too! Sticking her tongue out just slightly and biting the edge her lip, the pint-sized artist leaned back and sized up her pumpkin before adding just a few more pats here and there. The areas where the edge of the pink paint met the edge of the blue paint blended together in various versions of lavender, violet and purple. The colorful collage reminded the floppy-eared puppy of the kaleidoscope caused by the collection of candy when it all mixed up in the bottom of his bucket.

Admiring her handiwork, Doodle Dog tried to do what she had done by picking up a paintbrush in his mouth, dropping it in some green paint to match the pumpkin's stem, and plopping it against the orange surface. Twisting his head from side to side to swish the brush in what should have been an artistic effect, the floppy-eared puppy sat back to see his masterpiece. Hmmmm... that didn't quite work. In fact, that didn't work at all! It looked nothing like the little girl's pumpkin. Disappointed for just a moment, Doodle Dog decided to try his own way instead and immediately his nose knocked over the paint pot onto a scrap of plastic protecting the grass. Plunking his paws right into the puddle, the floppy-eared puppy plopped them against the pumpkin. Soon scattered paw prints in several colors decorated the sides of the orange orb.

Pausing to consider his creation, Doodle Dog could hear whirring coming from the adult table down the row, of what turned out to be a tiny power saw inviting complicated designs to appear in just a few seconds, the colorful rinds melting away as easily as the hot water in winter smoothed out rough edges of snow sculptures. Then Doodle Dog took just the tip of his claw and scratched in a couple slanted lines for pointy ears on the top, and six straight lines on the front. Nudging his nose to make three circles, two above the whiskers and one in the middle, and the pumpkin kitty appeared right before the floppy-eared magician. A swirl on the back for a slightly curled tail and another tiny paw print near it and the work of art was complete.

Purrrrfect! And not too scary at all.