



Puppy Tails

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Now that Doodle Dog had made it across the seemingly oh-so-scary stream thanks to the stubborn stones, he could sit back and enjoy the environment around him as it really didn't seem all that scary now. All that work made him quite wanting a nap but he was sure there would be more time for that later. For the time being there was much too much to discover and explore! So the floppy-eared puppy set out to see what he had missed while he was trying not to fall into the brook and now he could hear its conversation as it babbled and bubbled along. Turning one ear as close to the water as he could - careful not to fall in! - Doodle Dog leaned down to listen to what it was saying.

The plop-drop echo rolled over the river from one end to the next, then turning into a spitter-splatter spoot as it lapped along the earth's edge. Drips of the cool liquid gently sprayed up and landed on the floppy-eared puppy's fur. Doodle Dog shook his nose to dry off the misty droplets and continued to watch the wide rope of water winding its way over the rocks he had just crossed, through bits of grass and greenery sticking up at all angles and under natural bridges of dirt clumps and branches hanging low over the stream. There were no waves like on the shore of the lake, but this water had its own rhythm, its own melody, its own vocabulary as it traveled in its own way with its own style. And, unlike the lake with its speed boats zooming around being chased by air-filled donuts carrying giggling children or the wide open ocean Doodle Dog imagined with its grand pirate ships carrying swashbuckling adventurers to their next treasures, this brook's only passengers were tiny leaf ferries carrying curious ladybugs along for a lazy afternoon float.

As Doodle Dog watched the fleet of fallen leaves float one by one down the stream, gliding smoothly around the rocks and then slowing to a gentle drift down, down, down a series of swirling currents, he noticed little bubbles popping up every so often among the bits and baubles tipped out from the terrain's treasure box. Carefully pattering onto the next patch of moss, Doodle Dog placed his paws right at the river's edge and dipped his nose now as close to the water as he could. There, just beneath the glossy surface, something flicked its tail

and squirmed its long, flat body as it wove through the waves living underneath the crystal-clear fluid top layer, created by the underlying current but not breaking the transparent mirror-like surface above it.

The fish bent its body and twisted its tail, propelling itself down the stream just like the leaves but in its own unique way of getting where it needed to go. The curious little puppy couldn't resist the brilliant colors reflecting off the fish's back and soon his paw was no longer safely on the dry dirt of the riverbank but now found itself being poked into the collection of gleaming water drops in front of the floppy-eared puppy. Apparently not thrilled with this unexpected visitor interrupting his sunny afternoon swim, the fish darted to the left and dived down between mini forests of evergreen ferns gathered near the sandy base of the stream. Doodle Dog scampered to the next mossy patch to get a better view of the sort-of hidden fish. As the sun filtered through the water and shone on the fish's scales, the glistening gave its location away! The floppy-eared puppy didn't exactly want to get wet, but how was he going to play with his new fishy friend from way up on the riverbank? Leaving the safety of the stream's shore, Doodle Dog stretched his front paws even farther out and just barely caught the corner of the colorful fish's foliage-covered cave but couldn't quite reach the fish itself! Hmmm... what could the little floppy-eared puppy do? The determined Doodle Dog decided to stretch out EVEN farther, as far as his little legs could go and then stretched out his paws to give a few more inches to his reach. His back claws clung to the soil on the side of the shore and his fluffy tail tried to balance him as he extended every inch of furry length that he could. Concentrating now on not completely falling in rather than where exactly the fish was at the moment, Doodle Dog didn't notice that the creature was slowly creeping out from its hiding place.

SPLASH!

Doodle Dog took one second to look up from his precarious perch to predict the fish's intended path and, stretching out just a toe too far, he slipped from the shore and dropped, floppy-ears, mossy paws and all! As his fluffy tail followed the rest of him into the cool water of the stream, the plopped puppy glanced over to see that the fish took the opportunity to make a swish for

it, flicking its tail and swimming quickly down, down, down to the next swirling pools of the babbling brook and disappearing from Doodle Dog's view.

Slowly climbing out of the shallow stream and scampering up onto the dry shore, the very wet little floppy-eared puppy quickly shook first his nose and then the rest of him, scattering misty droplets all over the earth, the trees and whatever creatures might have been hiding among them, except the fish, of course, who was already very wet and very much out of sight! As his fur began to dry more completely in the warm sun, Doodle Dog decided now was the perfect time for an afternoon nap among the peaceful plants and gently chattering stream, lulling him to sleep with tales of adventures to come!