



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.*

Wandering along the tree line at the very point where the edge of the meadow meets the edge of the forest, Doodle Dog sniffed the grassy ground, taking in all the woodsy scents from the earthy bark to the sweet, airy wildflowers to the sharp tangy note of moss gathering in deep green patches and carpeting the area under his paws. As his nose traveled from strong musk to mildly luscious to subtle spicy smells, all then whooshed away instantly by the fresh breeze zipping through, the floppy-eared puppy stepped gently down the natural path, ducking under the foliage that grazed his ears.

As much as he loved spending time with his very favorite humans, the playful kids in the neighborhood, and appreciated being included in their joyful sidewalk games with all their little laughter and fun, Doodle Dog knew too that when the day came for them to pile into the big bumblebee school bus, it would have its own special charms as well. In addition to tickling his ears with the delighted noises of summer play, the floppy-eared puppy very much appreciated the times when all that could be heard was the soft gusts of wind whispering with peace and quiet, calming and soothing as it floated lazily over the land. Tenderly tiptoeing his way through the tangle of trees, Doodle Dog's paws picked a perfect place to pause for a moment and he settled onto a squishy pile of pine needles. The muted chattering of a bird in a nest somewhere above him alerted the curious puppy to what was on the other side of all those leaves. He remembered just how high up those limbs can go, serving as home for so many more creatures than just those with feathers and wings! The tranquil stillness of the darkened canopy area relaxed Doodle Dog all the way from his toes to the tips of his floppy ears. Ahhhhh.

Soon, as the floppy-eared puppy closed his eyes and focused on the wind wafting over his nose and the soft sounds in the distance, he nearly fell asleep! The comfortable canine probably would have too if it hadn't been for one ear noticing a noise that seemed quite intriguing indeed. Too intriguing to let it go unexplored! A plop of raindrops mixed with the rushing gurgle of a pot boiling on the stove in cooking class seemed faintly familiar to Doodle Dog's floppy ears, but as no rain clouds hovered in the sky today and he certainly wasn't indoors near a kitchen, the curious puppy couldn't quite figure out what might be making this plop-drop-pot echo from the branchy canopy to the moss carpet and up to Doodle Dog.

Softly stepping to the next pile of forest ferns, the floppy-eared puppy peered around the base of a particularly portly plant, its large leaves dwarfing the small but determined doggie as he listened again for the direction of the sound. There! Somewhere just on the other side of the bushes ahead of him the bubbling grew louder and Doodle Dog scampered to that somewhere as quickly as his paws could patter. Turning the corner of the canopy, the forest suddenly opened up into a clearing and just a few steps farther Doodle Dog could see a small river twisting and turning, a winding watery path right in the middle of all the stationary earth and trees. Specks of sunlight snuck in over the tops of the tree border, diving right on down to meet the inhabitants of this dripping dwelling. A smattering of river rocks, scattered this way and that as if a giant hand had casually tossed them like oversized coins in a fountain, poked out in places where the water then had to momentarily recalculate its route. In turn, the rocks glistened with the mixture of moisture and sunlight, evidence of the

unexpected teamwork. The beautiful babbling brook gently carved its course on a completely different trail from the other creatures in the clearing, not paying any mind to its new visitor carefully approaching the wet, unstable street.

The pretty product of polished pebbles attracted the little floppy-eared puppy, their glossy coats reminding him a bit of how smooth and shiny his own fur is after he's had a bath. Hmmmm... just thinking about a bath made the already-relaxed Doodle Dog sink just a little bit closer to the water's edge. Naptime usually followed bath time and any time is a good time for a nap! As he nudged his nose to the very point where the edge of the earth meets the edge of the water, Doodle Dog noticed the scattered stones formed a precarious path across the stream itself which meant he could explore right on over to the other side. Just curious enough to delay his nap for the time being, the floppy-eared puppy put one paw on the nearest pebble and put another paw on the next. Even though the shore was only inches away behind him, so far so good! Then Doodle Dog tried to put his other paw on the next pebble. Wobble, wobble, whoa! Okay, maybe not. As the rock road crossed the river, each spot appeared to get farther from the last. Doodle Dog wasn't exactly sure his little legs could stretch that far! Perched on a sort-of sturdy stone in the very middle of the brook now, the shore was just as far to go back as it was to keep going, so the floppy-eared puppy focused on the riverbank in front of him, even though it now seemed to be moving farther away while he looked. How would he make it now? Hopping from rock to rock reminded Doodle Dog of leaping over the squirmy jump rope with his friends. Certainly that had been harder to jump over something that was moving than it was to step from one steady spot to the next and he had done just fine then! Recalling the rocking rhythm of the rope, Doodle Dog took a deep breath and tried not to look at the moving water between his current spot and the next. With what seemed like a giant leap for the little puppy, and then another and another, Doodle Dog made it safely to solid ground, only then glancing back at what all he had found!