

Nappy's Bark




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by Mary Bailey

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Chapter One

The late afternoon sun casts long dancing shadows on the lawns, the pond and the brightly colored, neat brick houses that line the streets of Macka Grove. A dainty breeze teases and ruffles the orange-red, pink and yellow daffodils that lovingly litter the walkways and driveways.

By the side of the road near Gina's house, rests a lone yellow bloom. It stirs then quivers. It flutters, then gently rises from the asphalt. Up and away it flies, and flies, then lands squarely on the nose of a black cat, causing her to spring up from her nap.

Madison, the cat is Gina's pride and joy. She was curled up, enjoying a leisurely siesta on the veranda of the red brick house on Bramble Drive. Now she appears mildly annoyed.

"Meow!" she purrs loudly, then yawns, then looks around to see if there are others. Satisfied that there is no other flower heading her way, she stretches her paws out, scratches the yellow plant then tosses it around for a few seconds. Madison is accustomed to being home alone but today she is not thrilled about it.

Everyone seems to be outdoors, taking advantage of the idyllic weather in Macka Grove. Screams of delight echo through the Grove from children playing catch, tag, and laser tag in their yards and backyards.

Others romp in the nearby parks filled with lush green trees with their branches almost touching the grass. At the playground, the younger ones try to outdo each other riding the seesaws, swings, slides and climbing the monkey bars.

Scores of youngsters can also be seen enjoying a refreshing dip in the pool while others are frolicking with their pets, tossing Frisbees and squealing as they leap into the air to make daring catches.

Three doors down from the red brick house stands the blue house in which the twins, Tom and Worda McBean live. They are best friends with Gina. On their porch sits a massive brown and beige rescue dog, everybody's favorite pet, beloved by all.

"Such a handsome dog you are," remarks Miss Dewey, the librarian, in her customary hushed tones, as she walks home from work.

With his ears perked up and his tail slowly wagging, he saunters toward the gate.

“Woof! Woof!”

“You’re welcome,” she replies with a wry smile and goes on her merry way.

He is striking now but he was not always such an impressive looking dog. That’s for sure. When Mr. and Mrs. McBean locked eyes with the puppy at the adoption shelter, seven years earlier, he had looked very, very different.

He was so frail and fragile at the time that his paws could barely carry him. His eyes seemed to be glued shut and he lost his balance every time he attempted to move.

Feeding the poor thing was almost an exercise in futility. When he tried to drink, the milk trickled from the corner of his mouth. It was a pitiful sight to behold but Mr. McBean was drawn to the whelp.

Furthermore, he wanted his wife to have some company since he would soon be returning to the Middle East. The couple fell in love with the little critter and did not think twice about making him a part of their family.

For days, all the pup did was take small bites, small sips, and short naps. He was like a colicky baby, whining and whimpering incessantly. After one week, the whimper morphed into a bark. Two barks to be exact.

By the end of his first month, it was as though a miracle had occurred. He began gaining strength in his legs, and his bark could be heard from the street. He gave two loud barks whenever he wanted to eat, or exercise, or when he was greeting someone. It did not matter who.

It could be Jack, the newspaperman who never utters a single word. He pushes a cart up the street every morning, selling newspapers and peanuts. Jack is not able to call the dog by name but he smiles and waves at him.

‘Woof! Woof!’ he barks and Jack’s face lights up with a grin.

This energetic wonder was a joy to be around, traipsing after Mrs. Mac as she went about doing her household chores.

With the care and affection she showered on him, he grew into an active dog, consuming fewer meals but eating much larger portions. By the time the twins were born, he was jumping onto laps, licking faces and hands, chasing squirrels and bonding with dogs and even cats that he had met at the playground.

At seven years old, he is a year older than the twins. Standing unusually tall for his breed, he sports a soft silky, shiny brown coat, and is made even more striking by the beige patch on his stomach, atop his nose and between his brows.

His warm brown eyes, full of love, melt your heart when you get close enough to see them. His hairs bristle, his bushy tail becomes extra furry and swishy and he sticks it in the air then wags it frantically, when he feels afraid or threatened.

There is no denying his good looks but it is his friendly disposition and loyalty that endear him to the people who pass by on a regular basis. His looks may have changed dramatically but one thing remains the same.

He naps in the morning, afternoon, and evening and sleeps all through the night.

Nappy, as he has come to be known, is the toast of Macka Grove and everyone's favorite dog pal.

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