



TRAPPED!

A Search-and-Rescue
Dog Story



by Meish Goldish

Credits

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CHAPTER 1

BOOM!

“Hey, Sparky, fetch the ball,” said ten-year-old Jimmy. He softly kicked a soccer ball across the gym floor toward a small, white poodle.

Sparky scurried away and hid behind his owner, Mr. Brady. The dog let out an *Arf* and eyed the rolling ball **warily** as it slowly came to a stop. Jimmy and all the students around him laughed.

Mr. Brady chuckled, too. “All right, everyone, let’s start the first meeting of the Dog **Obedience** Club. For the first few meetings, we’ll work with my dog, Sparky, to learn the basic **commands**. Later on, you can bring in your own dogs.”

It was a cold winter afternoon at Hound Town Elementary School. Classes were over for the day. Everyone was out of the building except for the members of the club.

The students sat on the bleachers facing Mr. Brady, the fourth-grade science teacher. Jimmy raised his hand. “Mr. Brady,” he said, “my dog, Apollo, doesn’t always listen when I want him to come to me.”

“I sometimes have that problem with Sparky,” Mr. Brady replied. “He’s young and still learning, and he gets **distracted**.”

“So what do you do?” asked ten-year-old club member Melissa.



Mr. Brady bent down and petted Sparky as he spoke. “You must be gentle but firm. Let your dog know by the sound of your voice when you’re happy or unhappy with its behavior.”

Mr. Brady then said, “Sparky, sit.” The canine sat, tilted his head, and looked up at his owner.

“Now for the trickier part,” said Mr. Brady, smiling.

The students watched as Mr. Brady walked backward a few paces and stopped. Then the teacher said, “Sparky, come.”

Sparky hesitated. He looked at the students, then at the soccer ball a few feet away.

“Sparky, come!” said Mr. Brady, this time even more firmly.

The poodle began to walk toward his owner. Suddenly, there was a terrible noise. *BOOM!* A powerful explosion tore apart the gym floor. Everyone screamed and covered their heads as pieces of the bleachers flew everywhere!

A section of the wooden floorboards collapsed. The five students, along with Mr. Brady and Sparky, **plummeted** down into the school



basement one floor below. Smoke and dust filled the air. No one knew it at the time, but the school's gas **boiler** had just exploded.

Jimmy lay on his back, covered by wooden boards and other **debris**. He slowly moved his hands around and felt something soft under his body. He was lying on a pile of gym mats. His eyes stung from the dust-filled air. He coughed, trying to clear his dry throat. "Hello? Can anybody hear me?" he asked weakly.

Melissa whispered, "Yes, I can hear you."

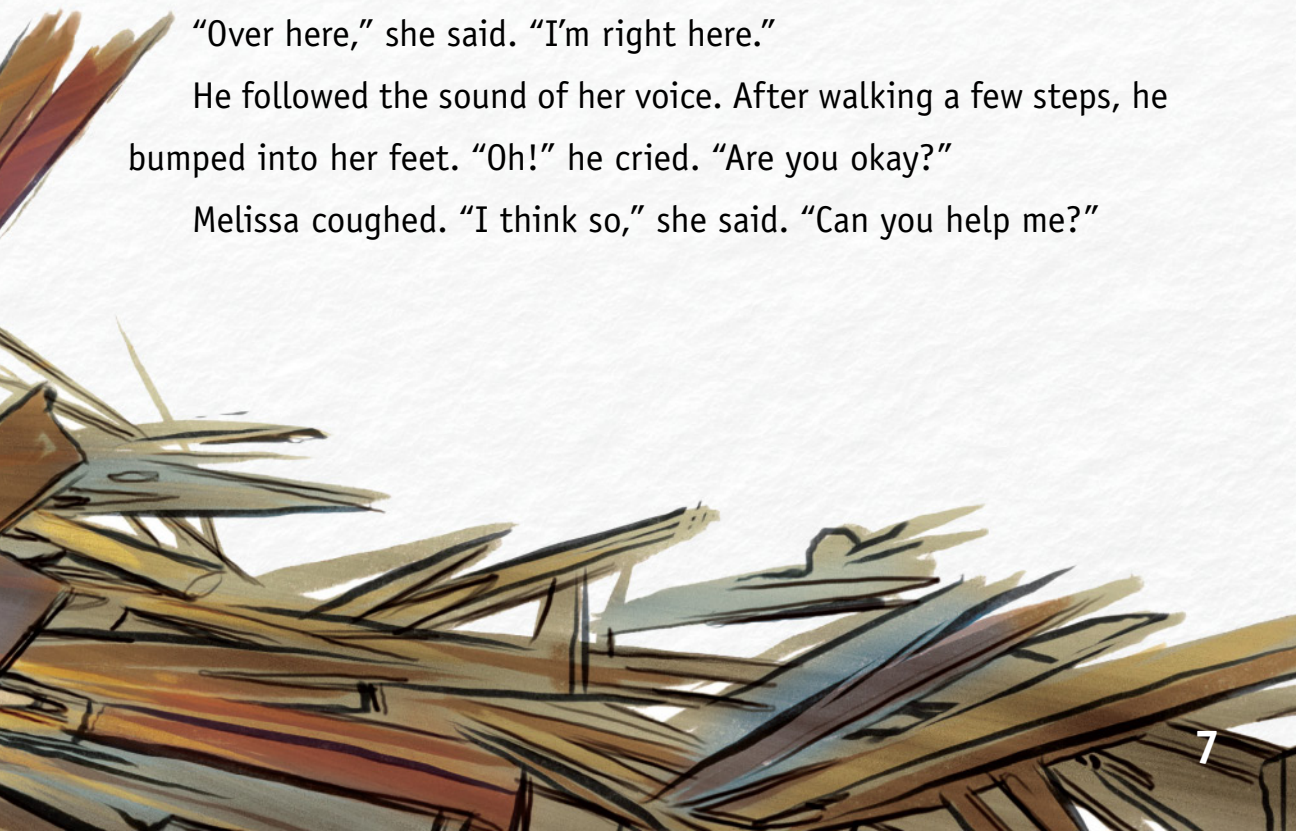
Jimmy felt sore all over, but he managed to crawl out from under the blanket of debris and stand up. He tried to find Melissa, yet it was too dark and smoky to see much.

Jimmy squinted his eyes. "Melissa, where are you?" he asked.

"Over here," she said. "I'm right here."

He followed the sound of her voice. After walking a few steps, he bumped into her feet. "Oh!" he cried. "Are you okay?"

Melissa coughed. "I think so," she said. "Can you help me?"





Jimmy bent down and slowly pulled Melissa out from under the pile of boards that covered her. Then he helped her stand up. "What happened?" Melissa asked, dusting herself off.

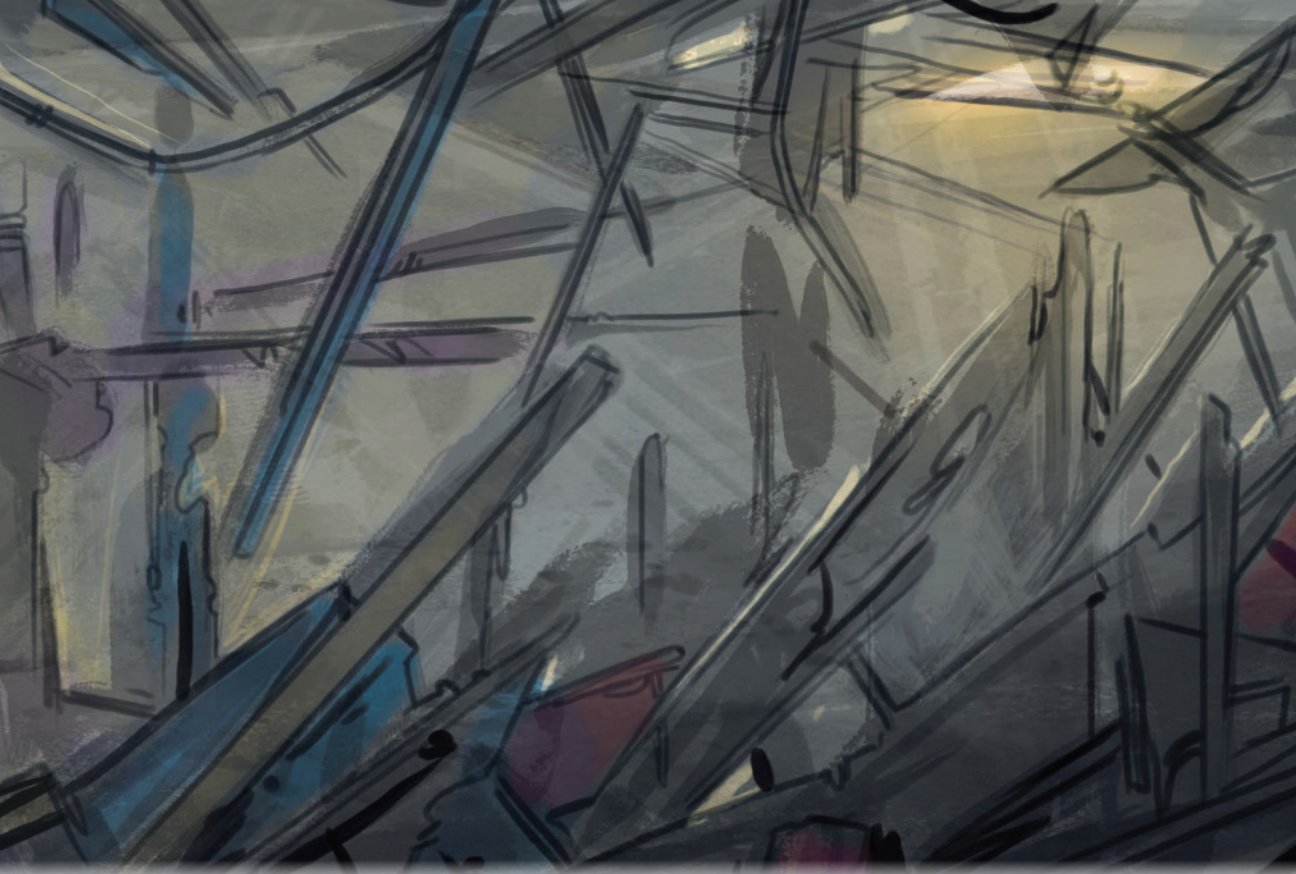
"I'm not sure," Jimmy said. "I think something exploded."

"Where are the others?" Melissa asked.

"I don't know," Jimmy said. "You're the first one I found."

Melissa began to shake nervously. "We've got to find everyone," she said. "We need to know if they're okay."

Melissa tried to walk, but she bumped into something in the darkness. "Ow! I wish we had a flashlight," she said.



“Yeah,” said Jimmy. Then, from the corner of his eye, he saw sunlight creeping into the smoky room from a tiny crack in the building. “Hey look, there’s light over there!” he cried. “Come on.”

Jimmy and Melissa shuffled toward the light. As they got closer, they could see their surroundings a little better.

“There are some old red gym mats piled up here,” Jimmy said. “That’s what we landed on. We must be in the school basement.”

“I hope the others landed on mats, too,” Melissa said. “Or else they could be really hurt. Let’s try to find them.”

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