

It's a Dog's Life

Opening

Melissa was a regular eight-year old girl: small, cute and incredibly stubborn. Melissa's parents were regular parents: caring, loving, old, (but Melissa would say) they just didn't understand her needs - she needed a Labrador puppy. Every week Dad would take her to the pet shop, where she would head straight for the large boxes displaying the undeniably cute Labrador puppies. Wafting through the tiny holes in the glass came the aromatic smell of the fresh straw, which the puppies would joyfully tumble through and play around in.

Build-up

Pressing her nose up against the spotless glass, Melissa looked longingly at the puppies. "Please, please, please, Dad!" she repeated for the third time.

"OK", came the usual playful reply from Melissa's dad.

"Really?" responded Melissa hopefully.

"No!" laughed her dad.

"You're mean, it's not fair", Melissa moaned.

"Well, it's a dog's life Melissa, as I keep telling you. You know mum and I don't believe you will look after it by yourself" (this conversation was repeated regular as clockwork on their visits to the pet shop).

Problem

Sulking, Melissa stomped into the room, straight past her parents to the fridge.

"Maybe we should take it back, she'll probably scare it to death with a face like that," suggested Dad.

"I think you're right, it's like a thunderstorm walked into the room," agreed Mum.

Melissa, despite her best efforts not to talk to them, was too curious not to ask: "Take what back?" when a smell that she recognised (and loved) began to make its way up her nose.

Instantly the storm clouds lifted and Melissa dashed towards the box in the middle of the table.

"I love you, I love you, I love you," she yelled ecstatically.

"Just remember, you promised that if we got you one that you would look after it *all on your own*, without any help from us," warned her Dad.

The sound of Melissa's "I will" floated in through the patio doors; she was already outside in the garden with her new best friend.

Resolution

After the initial excitement the puppy had curled up snug in his new basket, before drifting off to sleep. Watching him mesmerised was Melissa, until Dad called her over to the table.

"When we bought the puppy we also bought some books for you," and Melissa's Dad proceeded to pull out several large books: 'How to Keep Your Puppy Healthy', 'House Training For Young Dogs', 'Animal Psychology - a Beginner's Guide' (and quite a few more besides). Melissa's Dad watched her reaction, however he was surprised when she enthusiastically got down to reading the books - 'maybe I was wrong' he thought to himself. Feeling like an expert a few hours later, Melissa was ready to look after and train her baby. Over the next week, she would find out how hard it was to put the theory into practice. Although she did everything the books suggested, the puppy would go to the toilet in the most awkward places in the house - and she would have to clean it up. Despite rewarding him with treats when he did the right thing, he would do the wrong thing most of the time. Even though Melissa tried her best, she was unable to train or look after the puppy properly.

"Dad," she pleaded.

"Yes Melissa," came the sounds of Dad's voice from behind his newspaper.

"You were right, I'm sorry," sobbed Melissa miserably.

Ending

Expecting her Dad to gloat or say, "I told you so," Melissa was surprised when instead he scooped her up on to his knee and hugged her tenderly.

"There, there it's OK," he comforted her. "Mum and I have seen how much time and effort you have put in to trying your best and we're really proud of you."

"But I can't do it, what will happen to him?"

"Luckily, Susan next door has agreed to look after him, since she has lots of experience with puppies and loves Labradors," answered Dad.

"Will I get to see him anymore?" whimpered Melissa.

"Whenever you like - Susan said you can take him for walks, feed him or just play with him," assured Dad.

Wiping the tears from her face, Melissa felt much happier, so together they went round to Susan's house. Before they left, Susan insisted on showing them the other dogs that the puppy would have to play with, where he would sleep, what he would eat, hence Melissa was sure that he would have a contented life.

"One last thing before you go Melissa," said Susan, "I think you should give him a name."

As quick as a flash Melissa replied, "Nightmare," because he was a dream, but he turned into a ..."

Story plan

- Opening:** Setting - pet shop
Characters - Melissa (8 year old girl) and her Dad
- Build-up:** Melissa pesters her Dad for a puppy
- Problem:** Melissa's parents get her a puppy
- Resolution:** Melissa can't look after the puppy and has to give it away to a neighbour
- Ending:** Melissa is happy because she knows the puppy will be looked after and she can see it whenever she wants to