NEWS HOUNDS

THE DINOSAUR DISCOVERY





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THE DINOSAUR DISCOVERY



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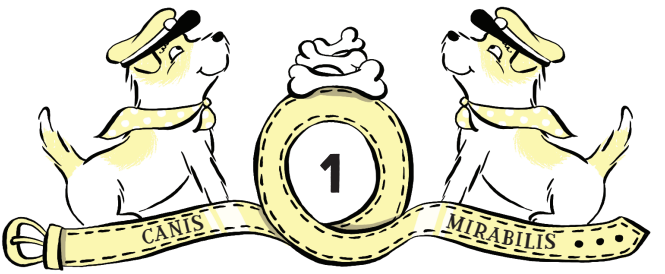
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For Evie – L.J.

In memory of my lovely mum x – C.A.







The doors closed, the whistle blew, and the city train at Platform 1 of Puddle Station left perfectly on time. Bob wagged his tail. He felt sure there was nothing in the whole world he'd ever love more than trains.

Colin, the stationmaster, bent down and gave Bob a tickle behind his ear. Trains and his master, decided Bob as he trotted beside Colin.

'Who's a good boy?' Arjan, the station cafe owner, called out, and Bob came running for the biscuit he knew Arjan had in his hand.

Trains, Colin and treats from the cafe.

Contented, Bob sat down as Colin and Arjan passed the time of day.





After a short while Bob gave a little whine. When that was ignored, he tugged gently on Colin's trouser leg. The next train was due in.

‘Bob’s reminding me the branch-line train is coming,’ Colin said. ‘Don’t tell anyone, but he’s the boss around here!’

Arjan laughed and they all got back to work. Bob checked as Colin secured the level crossing in time for the train’s arrival. It too pulled in perfectly on time. This pleased Bob a great deal.

But a few moments later, Bob spotted a problem. The branch-line

train had pulled in on time, but it was now a whole minute late leaving. He went over to see why the train driver hadn't closed the doors.

At the far end of the train, Mr Marcus – a man Bob recognised as the owner of the Curiosity Shop – was looking cross. He was struggling to get something on to the platform. Bob barked the alarm and rushed over to see if he could help.



Mr Marcus was pulling on a dog lead. When Bob got nearer, he realised that standing in the doorway of the train was the most extraordinary dog he had ever seen. The dog had long sleek fur and a sparkle in her eye. She was the colour of his favourite chew and she smelt like hay.



This dog was peering nervously into the gap between the train and the platform edge.

'Come on, you stupid dog, move!' Mr Marcus yelled.

Bob was shocked at such rudeness and, besides, it was clear that fear had set in and no amount of yelling would convince this dog to get off the train.

Bob boarded the train and stood beside her. He followed her gaze

down into the gap. He remembered a time when he too was frightened of the gap between the train and the platform.

'It's not as bad as it seems,' he assured her.

She looked at his short legs and then her long ones.



‘If I can make it safely on to the platform,’ Bob said, ‘then you definitely can.’

She raised an eyebrow.

‘OK, watch this.’ Bob jumped from the train on to the platform. ‘Easy!’ he said, jumping back on to the train. ‘Look, I can even skip it!’ He did so and she gave a small wag of her tail.





'Now you try,' he suggested. 'Easy. Jump off. Easy. Jump on. Easy.' Bob got a little carried away jumping on and off the train. So much so that he didn't notice she'd already elegantly stepped off the train and was safely on the platform.





The whistle blew and Bob quickly had to leap back on to Platform 2 before the doors closed and he was taken to the next station.

Mr Marcus was hurrying the extraordinary dog away, but before she left the station she glanced back at Bob.

'I'm Diamond, by the way,' she called out.

What a morning, thought Bob.



At that afternoon's Daily Bark news briefing, Bob was finding it difficult to think about anything other than Diamond.

Gizmo, as editor-in-chief, chaired the meeting. 'We really need a big story.



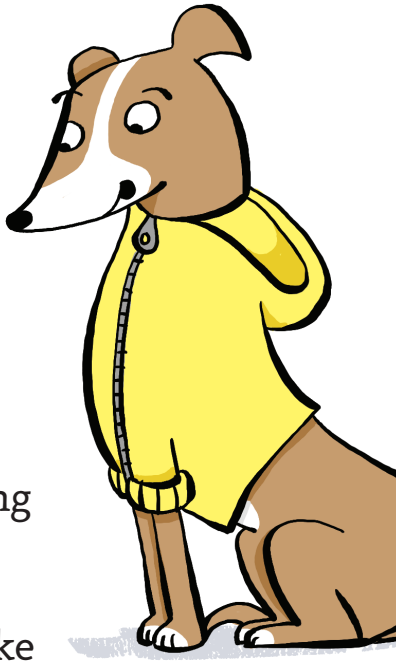


Bunty, what have you got?' he asked. 'What's the weather going to be like?'

'Sunny with occasional showers,' Bunty replied confidently. Being a farm dog, she understood the importance of knowing the forecast.

'Lola, any sports news?'

'Yes,' Lola replied excitedly.



‘Swimming in the river is back on! Someone has kindly removed the shopping trolley that was littering the riverbank, so the access is all clear. I’d like to encourage everyone to make a splash! And remember, stand as close to your humans as possible when shaking yourself dry. They love that. In other news, Jackson

the goldendoodle has broken the Puddle record for squirrels chased in one walk – a whopping fourteen! The squirrel season is particularly good this year.'

'Thank you, Lola. And Bruno?'

Bruno gave the News Hounds the low-down on the latest flea treatment. His report made Bob itch.



He wondered if Diamond ever got fleas. *Probably not*, he decided.

'Bob? Have you got any travel news to share?' Gizmo was asking him.



‘Oh, sorry, yes.’ Bob snapped out of his daydream. ‘There will be a freight train coming through at midnight tomorrow. It’ll be noisy, but tell residents there’s no need to bark unless they want to.’

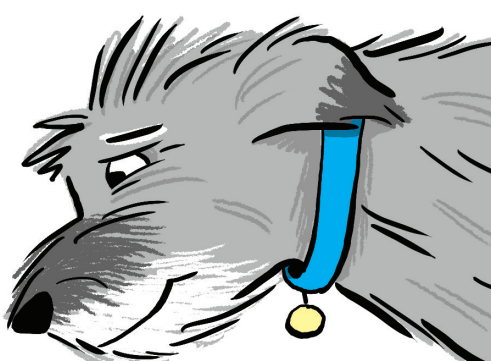
‘Thank you, News Hounds. Not exactly the big scoop I was hoping for, but we’ll see what we can do with it.’

Bob could tell that Gizmo was keen to close the meeting

and start work on the layouts, but he couldn't help himself ...

'Does anyone know anything about the new dog in town? Her name's Diamond,' he blurted out.

It was Jilly who answered first. As the Daily Bark's lead reporter, she always knew the latest social news in Puddle.



‘Apparently she came as part of the contents of a house sale Mr Marcus attended. Her human could no longer keep her and told him he couldn’t take the contents of the house for his shop without taking her too.’

‘That’s very sad,’ said Bob.

‘The really sad thing,’ said Jilly, lowering her voice, ‘is that he doesn’t even like dogs. The rumour is he’s a cat person.’



The News Hounds gasped in unison.

'Poor Diamond,' murmured Bob.

'I met her this morning,' said Gizmo. 'She seems very nice.'

'I'd like to be her friend,' said Bob a bit too loudly, and suddenly he felt like everyone was staring at him.

'You could go to Pageant Gardens tomorrow,' said Gizmo. 'Mr Marcus has started walking her there at eleven o'clock every day.'



