



Puppy Gets Stuck





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“Hello, Pickle!” It was Friday afternoon,
and nine-year-old Emily Wilson had run
straight out of school and down the drive
to the gates. There was her gorgeous
spaniel puppy waiting for her, his feathery
white tail beating with delight, his huge
brown eyes round and bright as he saw
her coming.

Woof! he went, tugging at the lead as
if he just couldn't wait another second to
be with her. *Woof, woof!*

Dumping her school bag on the
grass, Emily crouched down and threw





her arms around her puppy, making an enormous fuss of him. She cuddled him and fluffed up his soft brown and white fur and scratched him behind his long silky ears. Pickle, meanwhile, kept licking her face, his wet black nose cold against her cheek, his tail wagging even faster. He really was the cutest puppy *ever*, and her best friend in the whole world.

“Hello to you too, Em,” came Mum’s amused voice, and Emily looked up with a smile to see her there with Jack, Emily’s brother, who was five.

“Hi, Mum. Hi, Jack,” Emily said, getting up and hugging her mum. “Can I take Pickle’s lead now?”

“Of course,” Mum said. “I thought we could go to Albany Woods for a walk.”

“Yay!” cheered Jack, and Pickle immediately started barking and leaping around at the word “walk” as if he agreed.

Emily grinned. “You know what *that* word means, don’t you?” She laughed, reaching down to pat his side. “Your favourite word of all!”

“I think he’s learned some new favourite words today,” Mum said as they set off down the road. “Cheese straws.”

Pickle woofed immediately.

“What do you mean?” asked Emily.

“I baked some cheese straws this afternoon,” Mum explained, “and had just left them cooling on the table when the doorbell rang. . .”

“Uh-oh.” Emily laughed. She had a pretty good idea of how this story might go.

“And guess who scrambled up to the table while I went to answer the door . . . and ate *four* of them?” Mum finished.

Pickle gave another woof as if he were proudly saying, *Me! I did it!* That’s *how clever I am!* and Emily giggled. “Pickle by name, pickle by nature,” she said affectionately, watching as he stopped to sniff a lamp post.

Jack looked worried. “Are there any cheese straws left?” he asked.

Mum ruffled his hair. “There are plenty left,” she said, “and they’re safely in a tin

now, well out of reach of greedy pups. Apart from these two, which I brought along just in case there are any hungry children. . .”

“Me!” cried Jack at once.

“Thanks, Mum,” said Emily, munching hers. She gave the lead a gentle tug. “Come on, Pickle, enough sniffing.” He was so inquisitive that he liked to stop and smell *everything*: a nettle, the wall, a piece of litter. . . He’d often swerve right in front of Emily’s legs to get to a particularly exciting gateway or hedge, and had nearly tripped her up several times in his eagerness.

Emily didn’t mind. Pickle was so funny and lovely, she could forgive him anything. Ever since she’d first seen him, when they’d gone to the rehoming centre on her ninth birthday, she had been

totally smitten. Back then, he'd been no more than a handful of brown and white fur with a soft round tummy and a fluffy tail. Emily's heart had simply melted when he'd gambolled over to her with a little yip of excitement, his big round eyes shining. "This one's my favourite," she'd said, reaching down to scoop him up. "Look, Mum!"

"I think he's chosen you, too," Mum had said laughing as Pickle poked out a teeny pink tongue and licked Emily's cheek.

They'd had to wait eight weeks – the longest eight weeks of Emily's life! – before the puppies were old enough to leave their mum, a sweet-natured rescue dog who was going to a new home, too. At last Emily had been able to collect Pickle, and he'd quickly become part of

the family. He was nearly six months old now, and his tiny, stumpy legs had grown longer, as had his feathery tail. Emily could hardly remember what life had been like before he'd come to live with them. Having Pickle made everything much more fun, that was for sure.

"Good boy," Emily said encouragingly as he trotted along beside her. "That's it – heel!"

She and Dad had just started taking Pickle to puppy training classes, and she was trying to teach him different commands. He'd been to two lessons so far, although both had been a bit of a disaster. During the first one, Pickle had just wanted to play with all the other puppies. He was such a friendly little dog, he had kept scampering up to them

whenever he'd had the chance, sniffing them and cheerfully waving his tail as if to say hello. He'd also done quite a lot of excited barking. Oh yes, and then he'd weed on the floor right at the end. . .

Luckily, the training lady had just smiled. "I've seen it all before," she'd said, passing Dad a mop. "And let's face it . . . it could have been worse."

So far Pickle had learned to sit (with a bit of help – you had to push his bottom down to remind him), and stay (for about five whole seconds) and walk to heel.

Recently, Emily had tried to teach him to get into his basket, too, although he tended to jump in and then jump straight out again, his tail wagging proudly as if to say, *There – I did it. What game shall we play now?*

Once they reached the woods, Emily unclipped Pickle's lead. She could always feel him trembling with excitement whenever she let him off it. As soon as he was free this time, he gave a big happy woof and bounded down the track, his floppy ears flying out to the sides like furry brown wings. He sniffed at every tree, put his head down a rabbit hole and nosed eagerly through the long grass like an intrepid explorer on an expedition.

Emily and Jack ran beside him while Mum walked behind with their school bags. Now that Pickle's legs were longer, he could go quite fast, especially when he saw a squirrel up ahead on the path. Barking non-stop, he charged breathlessly towards the creature – which promptly shot straight up the nearest tree, its bushy tail twitching.



Emily laughed. “Oh, Pickle,” she said, as he put his front paws against the tree trunk and yapped a great long message to the squirrel. “Come on,” she called, “leave the poor thing alone.”

It was a sunny spring day and the dappled light shone between the leafy branches of the trees. Daffodils bobbed their heads in a breeze, and the air felt warm against Emily’s face. Mum suggested that they go further into the woods than usual as it was such a lovely day, and everyone – especially Pickle – thought that this was a very good idea.

They rounded the corner, and Emily saw that one of the large natural ponds in this part of the wood was covered with bright green duckweed. Pickle noticed it too, and rushed off to investigate. Unfortunately, he seemed to

think the green duckweed was ordinary grass and ran cheerfully on to it . . . and in the very next moment, the “grass” gave way and he splashed straight into the water!

Emily gasped. “Pickle!” she cried, rushing over at once. The little puppy gave a yip of surprise as he found himself in the cold pond, and had to paddle his front paws to keep afloat. He was probably wondering how the grass had turned into water.

“He’s swimming,” Jack shouted, laughing. “Keep going, Pickle, you might get your five-metre badge!”

Emily laughed too. Pickle seemed to be rather enjoying himself, now that he’d got over the shock of cold water, and was swimming around very splashily. “Come on, boy, over here,” she called, bending

over a little and patting her thighs encouragingly. “Come to me, that’s it.”

She reached out her hand and as soon as he’d paddled near enough, she grabbed his collar and hauled him out of the water.

Covered with duckweed and mud, Pickle looked completely bedraggled. He smelled absolutely terrible, too.

“Pickle Wilson, what are you like?” Emily groaned. “Look at him, Mum.”

“Poo!” Jack said, holding his nose. “Pickle pong.”

“It’s not his fault,” Emily said loyally. “Is it, boy? He. . . Aargh!” She leaped back as Pickle chose that very moment to give himself a thorough shake, spraying Emily with stinky mud from head to foot.

“Yuck!” she shrieked, wiping a strand of duckweed from her face. Pickle wagged his tail as if he’d just been very helpful,



and Emily found herself giggling. You really couldn't be cross with a puppy like Pickle!

Jack burst out laughing, and Mum looked as if she was trying not to chuckle too. "Oh dear," she said. "What a mucky pup – and what a mucky daughter! I hope you two won't get too cold now you're so wet. Perhaps we'd better head back."

Emily agreed. "Let's put you on the lead, Pickle," she said, clipping it safely on to his collar. "I think that's enough exploring for one day, don't you? We don't want you getting into another pickle!"

Woof! Pickle agreed, wagging his muddy tail.

They set off towards home, Pickle's fur slowly drying in the sunshine. As they passed their neighbours' house they saw that Mr and Mrs Turner were in their front garden, pulling up some weeds.

Mr Turner looked up and smiled when he saw them. "Goodness me, Pickle, what *have* you been up to?" he asked.

Mrs Turner's eyes twinkled. "It looks like somebody will be going straight into the bath when you get home," she said, laughing.

Mum shook her head. “I’m tempted to put the pair of them in together,” she joked. “I’m not sure who’s the muddiest, Emily or the dog!”

Once they were back inside, Emily quickly changed out of her muddy clothes and helped Mum fill the bath for Pickle, who wasn’t very happy about being washed at all. Despite Emily’s best



efforts, he kept trying to clamber out, his claws uselessly scrabbling at the side. Water and the bubbles from his special doggy shampoo went *everywhere*, and soon Emily and Mum were drenched, too.

Afterwards, Emily dried Pickle in a big fluffy towel and brushed the tangles out of his fur. “There,” she said when it shone once more. “You’re as good as new.”

Once Pickle had eaten his tea, he seemed so tired that he barely had the energy to move. Instead of making the short journey to his basket, he curled up on the floor by his food bowl and closed his eyes.

Emily smiled as his head sank dreamily on to his front paws. “Pickle! Get in your basket.” she reminded him in the sing-song voice she always tried to use when giving him commands.

Pickle opened one eye and peered groggily at her.

“Good boy, Pickle, get in your basket,” Emily coaxed.

Pickle was so sleepy he could hardly walk, but he obediently staggered to his feet and trotted over to his basket. He flopped into it, gave a deep sigh of relief, tucked his nose under his favourite cuddly bear, then promptly fell straight back to sleep. Within seconds he was snoring.

Emily stroked his soft fur. “What a good boy,” she told him, gently resting her head on his sleeping body and listening to his heartbeat. “I hope you have a lovely dream about chasing squirrels. Sleep well . . . and let’s have another adventure tomorrow.”



Emily had always enjoyed weekends, but ever since Pickle had joined the family, she loved them even more. Two whole days of puppy play! She couldn’t think of anything nicer. Even better, her friend Chloe was coming over for the morning, too.

Emily scrambled out of bed and pulled on her dressing gown, then went downstairs to see her pup. He had obviously been exploring the shoe basket by the back door, because he’d pulled all the shoes out of it and was now having