

The Barker



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Jessie Grace Tschudin





Hi There, Dog Lover!

Woof! Woof! I'm so glad you're here. In fact, I'm going into a major tail-spin, and I'm running around like crazy. Such exuberance is typical for me. After all, I'm a dog. A healthy, happy dog named Jessie.

I'm one very lucky pooch! When my original family could no longer keep me, I was adopted by a woman named Ruth and given a wonderful new life. How I wish that every lonesome, heartsick, and abandoned pet could have the same good fortune.

My life story so far is filled with the usual ups and downs, delights and challenges. But in some ways, my story is truly unique. For example, can you believe that it was my name that miraculously saved me? Just stick around, and I'll tell you all about it.

What fun it's been expressing my thoughts and feelings in your language. English is so much more expressive than my everyday *bark-growl-whine* vocabulary. And being able to tap Ruth's brain for all those human insights and juicy details has certainly been enlightening.

But the best part of my journey is that I've learned some valuable lessons along the way. At the end of each chapter, you'll see my paw pointing out these lessons. So take a little time to pause at the "Paws." If you discover some lessons I've overlooked, great! Just write them in and make this book even better.

I'd love to hear from you! You can contact me at my own personal e-mail address: *Jessiesfriends@verizon.net*. I'm always on the lookout for new friends, and I hope you'll be one of them!

Your pal,



Jessie

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CHAPTER 1

Will I Ever Stop Hurting?

When things get tough, it's so easy to despair and so hard to imagine ever being well or happy again. I learned this the hard way when I was dropped off at an animal control shelter in Staten Island, New York, by the family I'd lived with my entire life. Someone in my own family, a boy whom I loved and trusted, had emotional problems and started hurting me so much that one of us had to go. Guess who!

It must have been a difficult decision for my loved ones, who had taken such good care of me over the years. They probably thought that bringing me to the shelter was the best thing they could do for me, but the shock of our abrupt separation left me confused and brokenhearted. I was suddenly and unexpectedly a lonely, down-and-out dog. Being abused by a loved one was horrible, but losing both home and family was absolutely terrifying.

To make matters worse, total strangers started looking me over, poking and prodding. I didn't know what was happening, and my cheerful, loving personality quickly disappeared. They de-wormed me and stuck me with needles. Then they topped it off by putting a chip in me so I couldn't even run away without being brought back to this scary place. I pulled away from them whenever I could, and they wrote on my chart: *Timid. Does not tolerate handling. Can you imagine?* Just a day earlier that description of me would have made no sense.

Let me tell you, it was really rough. I felt like I was going crazy—all those new smells, all those busy people rushing around, all those dogs barking and yelping. I've lived with cats, and call me weird if you like, I'm okay with them. But so many noisy, cooped-up dogs drove me bonkers. I started to panic, and my whole body trembled.

Even though I hated being there, I'm thankful now for those who watched over me. I didn't appreciate it at the time, but while I was at the shelter, I ate good meals and met wonderful people. Some of them didn't even get paid; they were there just because they love animals and want to help us. But all I could think about at the time was my own misery. The days and nights were excruciatingly long—and sad. I was used to running free and being part of the family fun. Now I was imprisoned and unloved. That first week seemed more like a century.

It was June, such a pretty time of year. But here I was, unfairly punished, hopelessly trapped, and downright distraught. *Why is this happening to me? Could this be my fault?* I didn't know what to do, so I started nervously chomping on my leg, and it started to bleed.

Fortunately, things took a turn for the better when the New Hope people came to look us over. These are people from various rescue groups who give animals like me a new start. If they can see the slightest glimmer of hope for finding us good homes, they'll even snatch us away from "death row." (*I still shudder at the thought!*)

The people from Rawhide Rescue in nearby New Jersey took a special liking to me. They overlooked the graying chin that others found so discouraging and looked right into my heart. They wasted no time in getting me out of the shelter, to a place where I'd get more of what I needed and craved: a little extra TLC and the assurance that I wouldn't be put down. I got to live in one of their foster homes so I could relax and feel better about myself. Then they put me up at an animal hotel—they called it a kennel—while I waited for a new home.

Thanks to my friends at Rawhide Rescue, my inner light was rekindled and I began to trust again. Then my cheerful, loving disposition reappeared, and photos of me were posted on the Internet with descriptions that captured my true essence:

Jessie has tons of love and affection to give. She adores people of all sizes and loves to be showered with attention. Her personality is loving and gentle. She is attentive and walks nicely on a leash. If you're interested in a loyal companion who only wants to please you, Jessie is the one for you!

But even though my new friends tried their hardest to help me feel better, I was still very upset. My life was filled with uncertainty—more new places and faces, more moving around, and more not knowing.

Won't my family ever come and get me? Can't they find a way to help the kid who hurt me, so we can all live together again? I had lots of questions, but no good answers.

I started to feel sick and kept sneezing all the time. They examined me and gave me some medicine, but instead of getting better, I only got worse. I couldn't even go to the adoption party at the pet store, because they were afraid I might make the other dogs sick. It was so depressing, like having a dark cloud hanging over me.

I could only lie there wondering how I'd ever get adopted if I couldn't go out and meet people. And that same pitiful question kept hounding me...

Will I ever stop hurting?



“Paws” for Lessons Learned

Life's unfair, but don't despair. Look for the good.

Hang in there! There are a lot of nice people out there.

Accept help when it's needed. Then plan to pay it back and pass it on many times over.