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The Little Ball

Maud Lindsay

What became of one of the Toy-Lady's little balls, you must be told. It was bought for a big, beautiful, shaggy dog named Don.

Don had a little master, and every day the two played together with the ball. There was no end to the fun they had.

The little boy would throw the ball as far as he could send it, and Don would go bounding after it and bring it back; or if it were tossed in the air, he would catch it when it came down. Don could catch a ball in his mouth almost as well as you can catch one in your hands.

Sometimes the little boy would hide the ball in a heap of yellow leaves under the maple tree and tell Don to find it. Don understood all about finding things. No sooner had the little boy said, "Find the ball, Don," than away the dog would go to jump into the leaves, scattering them in all directions and barking as if to say, "I know it is here. You can't hide the ball from me." And sure enough, back he would come with it.

Once Don hid the ball himself in a hole that he dug with his paws, and he covered it over with dirt so carefully that you would not have known it was there.

The little boy could not imagine what had become of the ball. He searched for it all over the house and the yard, and Don followed him looking very solemn and wise.

At last, the little boy sat down on the doorstep to rest.

"Don's ball is lost, and I don't believe I'll ever find it," he said to his mother.

"Why don't you ask Don to help?" said his mother. "He's a good finder."

Don pricked up his ears at the sound of his name, and the little boy had scarcely said, "Find the ball, Don," before the dog ran to the hiding-place. When he scratched away the dirt that covered the ball, he looked as if he were laughing, or at least that is what the little boy thought.



Don was not only a clever dog but a trusty one. If the little boy gave him the ball and told him to keep it, nobody could get it away from him. He would lie on the ground with the ball between his fore-paws, and if anyone came too near, he would growl deep in his throat, "Gr-r-r-r! Gro-rerar!"

The little boy's playmates thought it was great fun to beg Don for the ball, and since they could not get it from him, they sometimes tried to coax him away from it.

One day, a big boy came with a juicy mutton-bone to tempt the dog.

"He'll leave anything for this. You see if he doesn't," said the big boy.

"No, he will not," said the little master, and he called, "Keep the ball, Don, keep the ball!"

The big boy put the bone a little way from the dog and called him, too: "Here, Don, here!" But Don did not stir from his place. He knocked his tail on the ground, though, to tell the big boy that he liked mutton-bones.

"Good dog! Come and get your bone," said the boy; and thump, thump, thump went Don's tail.

No matter what the big boy said, nor how good the mutton-bone smelled, Don would not leave the ball.

"I knew he wouldn't," said the little boy, running to get it. "I told you so." He felt very proud of his dog just then.

And you will be glad to know that Don got the mutton-bone after all, and enjoyed it.



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