

Harry was the biggest, dirtiest, and hairiest dog I'd ever seen. He looked like a typical mutt with long dark brown fur and large black spots peppered all over. I started seeing him a few weeks ago at the park I usually walked past on my way home from school. I had no idea what his name was since his faded and torn blue collar had nothing on it. Based on his looks I picked the creative name of Harry. He usually put a smile on my face when I saw him each day because my five block walk home was pretty boring other than watching out for the annoying Tommy Glunt. Tommy is only a year older than me, but he's the biggest eighth grader I'd ever met. I have no idea what his Mom feeds him, but I'm guessing it's probably similar to that of a big horse. For whatever reason, Tommy enjoyed picking on me at least once a week. I usually bargained for my life by offering him a piece of candy or money. Then he'd let me go.

Ever since I started seeing Harry I worried less about Tommy and more about Harry. Several times I tried to get my Mom and Dad to let me bring him home, but I never got anywhere with them. My Dad kept saying it was up to my Mom and my Mom never grew up with pets so to her they were just another chore and as far as she was concerned she had enough to worry about with me and my Dad. I refused to give up though.

"C'mon Mom. I promise I'll take care of Harry. I'll feed him and walk him and everything."

"Harry? If he has a name then he must have an owner."

"No, that's just what I'm calling him. I'm sure he doesn't have an owner."

"You're not getting a dog. Especially some stray you found in the park."

"But Mom, it's getting cold outside. Harry can't stay in the park."

"Dogs are dirty, smelly, and they cost money just like your Uncle Leonard. I'm not going to tell you again, but if you want we can put an ad in the paper to see if someone lost him."

I didn't want to be pushy out of fear I would never get the chance to have any kind of pet. I also didn't want to want anyone else to have Harry, but I figured it would probably be better than the scruffy fellow living out his days in the park fighting other animals for food and shelter. Apparently my Mom made several calls around to various places to find a home for Harry, but unfortunately every place was full and they even asked my Mom if she would be willing to take Harry in until a space opened up, but she told them she couldn't. So, in a way I'm happy because I know where to find Harry everyday, but I also know this won't last long and it probably isn't the best for him. I've been sneaking him pieces of bread and cereal from my breakfast each morning and some fresh water with an old water bottle I filled every day. Even though I've been leaving for school earlier and earlier each morning it didn't seem to bother my Mom. I'm pretty sure she knew what I was doing, but never said anything. A few times I even found an extra piece of bread lying on the table. I hated leaving Harry after school and I tried to stay as long as I could. I guess one day I ended up staying too long.

All I know is one second I'm waving goodbye to Harry and the next I'm getting hit from behind and end up on the ground on my back with Tommy sitting on top of me. He's smacking me in the face trying to get whatever he can out of my jacket pockets. The jerk may be bigger than me, but I'm squirming and yelling as much as I can. Unfortunately were on a quiet street just down from the park, so there isn't anyone around. Geesh, it's only three in the afternoon. Where is everybody? I'd like a little help here.

"Leave me alone," I yell while trying to kick.

"Listen you piece of crap. Give me some money or candy or I'll hurt you!" Tommy yells while shoving his fist in my face. The threat seems somewhat empty to me considering he's already beating me to a pulp.

“I told you I don’t have anything,” I yelled back. I can barely move because of his weight. This guy seriously needs to think about going on a diet. He’ll probably be dead before he reaches Junior High. The next thing I know my world is shaking violently. Tommy has grabbed the front of my jacket and is apparently trying to shake some priceless treasures out of my coat. Of course all he’ll get is a nice wad of lint, but trying to explain that to a raving mad eighth grader is not on my mind at the moment. I’m screaming and yelling and trying to get away especially since I’m already way late getting home and my Mom is going to kill me. She’ll have to wait her turn. Actually both Tommy and my Mom will have to wait their turn because moments later all I can hear is a loud screech coming from Tommy and I can see a shocked expression on his face as he stops shaking me and his body appears to be frozen in time. Within seconds he jumps off me and starts crawling away on his hands and knees. Looking up I can see Harry a foot away from me growling at Tommy who can’t move away fast enough because he gives Tommy a nip to his butt tearing his pants and showing off his white fruit of the looms. Tommy’s finally gotten to his feet and runs away without looking back. With Tommy gone, I’m able to let out a deep breath and Harry comes over and lies by me licking my face and letting me pet him. Unknown to me, my mother is standing about ten feet away and has seen part of this drama play out before she could do anything. Normally she would’ve been running down the street with her trusty broom ready to swat anyone she thought was causing trouble. She comes over to me and reaches down to help me up.

“Mom, I’m sorry I’m late, I—“

“Are you alright,” she asks checking my face with her hands and then giving me a hug while Harry watches.

“I think so. I’m sorry —“

“I saw what happened. That boy’s parents will be hearing from me. Let’s get you home and cleaned up.”

“Okay, but I need to say thanks first.”

My mom watches me as I go over to Harry giving him a big hug and patting his head. I also gave him some pieces of bread I had saved from my lunch. Another pat on the head and I ran back over to my Mom.

Within seconds, my mom turns to me and says, “Didn’t you forget something?”

“Huh?” I checked my clothes and the ground, but I didn’t see anything.

“Your dog?”

“My what?”

“You can’t very well leave your dog here. We need to get him home and cleaned up. I’m sure he’s hungry too.”

“Really? You mean that?” I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. I was shaking with excitement.

“He’s your dog now. He took care of you. Now you need to take care of him. Hurry up and get him before I change my mind.”

I ran back to Harry lightning quick to where he was still sitting and watching us.

“C’mon Harry. We’re going home.”

It didn’t take long for Harry to endear himself to my parents. Within a week my mom let him sleep in bed with me. As much as I enjoyed that he is still one of the biggest dogs I’ve ever seen and boy does he take up a lot of space in bed.

After my incident with Tommy I never saw him during my walks home again. A few weeks later I heard from someone at school that Tommy got into a fight with some smaller kids

at school and ended up having to transfer to another school on the other side of town. My mom always said that everything happens for a reason, so I guess I have to thank Tommy Glunt for being the reason that brought Harry into our lives.