

The Adventures of  
**Little Dog  
Koko**



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## Chapter One

# Animal Shelter

**K**oko woke from his nap, stretched and yawned. He walked over to the bowl of food on the concrete floor of the large cage. One of the three young poodles also in the cage started to growl. Koko turned and fixed an eye on him. The poodle stopped growling and curled up next to his brothers.

Koko ate a few bites of the food and returned to his corner in the back of the cage. He'd been here for over two months. At least he had medical treatment in the animal shelter. The vet had doctored his eye that had been put out in a fight with a dog five times his size.

Koko was a little dog, a Shih-Tzu. The breed originated in China where they were companions to the Empress and her favored ones. These pampered dogs were greatly valued. They were fed only the best foods and their long hair was combed every day. With his hair cut short, Koko looked like a puppy even though he was around five years old. *I don't feel very royal right now*, he thought.

Curled up in a ball at the back of the cage, Koko waited

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for the visitors to come. People came every day to view the dogs in their cages. Koko remembered when he had a good home with a little old lady that he called Mama. She was nice. Mama would pet him and kiss him on the head. He had furry toys that she would throw for him to chase. Koko would run after them and when he grabbed them in his mouth, they made a squeaking noise. The first time he heard that sound, he dropped the toy. He thought he'd hurt it, but he hadn't; the toys just liked to squeal when he carried them.

Koko always had good food and fresh water when he lived with Mama. A young lady came to Mama's house and took him for walks three times a day. He really liked his walks with her.

He didn't like walks with Stewart, Mama's great nephew. He was mean to Koko. He jerked on his leash and poked Koko with his foot. When Stewart wanted some money from Mama, she made him walk Koko to earn it. Stewart was Mama's only relative that lived close to her. Koko would wish for Stewart to not come by again, but he'd return every so often to ask for more money.

Some visitors to the shelter interrupted Koko's thoughts. The three poodles were standing on their hind legs with their paws on the front of the cage. Koko tried to join them, but the bigger poodles jumped around and kept knocking him down. Koko started to tear into the last poodle that did it, but he remembered that Buck had told him not to start fights in front of the people.

Buck was a Bloodhound that had been in a cage next to his. One day a keeper took Buck away, and Koko never saw

him again. Buck told Koko that if he were lucky, one of the visitors would adopt him and give him a good home. Koko hoped that was true.

Another dog told him that the keeper would put him in a machine that would grind him up into horse food. But Buck told Koko that wasn't true. Horses didn't eat dogs; they ate oats and grass. Buck had grown up on a farm with horses and other animals. Still, Koko knew that not all the dogs that the keeper took went to new homes.

Several people seemed interested in Koko until they saw the eye that was missing and his yellow teeth. Koko returned to his corner and curled up. Nobody was ever going to adopt him. The keeper would probably come for him one day—but not to give him a new home. The keeper took Sparky away yesterday. *I hope he found a good home*, thought Koko.

Koko returned to his memories about the good old days with Mama. He'd been with her for three years. Back then he weighed more, and had white teeth and two eyes. Koko was skin and bones now under his thick, matted fur. His fur was mostly black with a little white under his chin and on his chest.

He remembered the bad day when Mama got very sick. She was carried out on a stretcher and never returned home. The nice lady didn't return to take him for walks; he had to go live with Stewart. By then Stewart was grown and had a small apartment. He was mean to Koko every day. He kicked Koko and would forget to feed him or fill his water bowl.

One morning Koko didn't feel well and threw up on the

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kitchen floor. Stewart screamed at him and beat him with a thin metal wire he took out of the closet. The wire hurt Koko, so he ran away from Stewart and hid under the bed.

Later Stewart peeked under the bed and smiled at Koko. "Would you like to go for a ride, Koko?" Koko didn't move. "Look, Koko, I have a squeak toy for you."

*Stewart must feel bad about hurting me,* thought Koko.

Stewart squeezed the toy to make it squeak and Koko crawled out from under the bed. Stewart put the leash on Koko and led him to the car. Koko hopped in the front seat. Stewart started the car and drove for a long time.

When Stewart finally stopped, they were at a large park. Carrying Koko's squeak toy with him, Stewart took the leash off Koko. He squeaked the toy and threw it. The little dog ran after the toy, picked it up and ran back to Stewart. He was having a lot of fun. Stewart threw the toy a long way down a hill. Koko ran after it and found it in a bush. When he turned around, Stewart was gone.

*Where's Stewart?* Koko wondered. He ran up the hill with the toy in his mouth. He couldn't find Stewart. Looking around the park, he finally spotted him getting in the car.

Koko dropped the toy and barked so Stewart would know he had been forgotten. Stewart turned and looked at Koko before he drove away.

*What's he doing? Where's he going?* Koko ran as hard as he could to catch the car, but it was too fast. When it disappeared from sight, he stopped and returned to the park.

*I'll just wait here for him to return. He probably went for some food. I wonder why he didn't take me with him?* The little dog picked up his squeak toy and waited by the curb. The day grew dark and the stars came out, but Stewart didn't return.

Koko heard some loud howls and didn't feel safe by the curb. He went into some bushes and curled up with his toy. He wasn't cold, but he was very hungry and scared. Cars roared by on the highway, and dogs were fighting nearby. He was very tired and fell asleep until some animal scream woke him up. Trembling, he listened for a while, then slipped back to sleep, only to be awakened by the squeal of tires as someone slammed on the car brakes.

*I hate all the loud noise and sleeping on the ground. I want to go home, have something to eat, and sleep in my own bed.* The little dog curled up with his toy, closed his eyes, and once again tried to sleep.