

MY GREAT ESCAPE

LITERARY ARTS – SHORT STORY

by Eric Mens

## MY GREAT ESCAPE

My name is Buddy Steve. I live a sheltered life. At least, I do now. You see, I'm a rescue dog. Originally, my name wasn't "Buddy Steve." It was "Sardine." Who names a dog "Sardine"?!

My rescue Mama usually calls me "Steve" - except when she's mad about something I did. Like, when I've messed with her pillows. Or, when I've scarfed up the other dogs' food before they've had a chance to eat. Then, she calls me "Stephen!" very loudly. I don't mind. She can call me anything she wants because she loves me lots.

I'm so well-trained that I'll even bring your shoes to you - whether you want them or not. My family loves me so much that they often spoil me with treats to reward me for my wonderful personality and impeccable manners (NOT!).

I'm a very handsome and svelte, seven-year-old tri-colored Beagle mix. Some people think that I'm a purebred and "Ooh and Ahh" when they first meet me. Mama knows better. I'm just a special 'one-of-a-kind' beagle!

Although I often dream of running free, I rarely have a chance to leave my yard. At bedtime, Mama forbids me from sleeping with her because she says I'm too restless and noisy. I think that has more to do with her wanting to keep the bed all to herself! She doesn't understand that beneath this handsome façade, I am really a wolf at heart. So, I am relegated to sleeping on the couch. There I can nest to my heart's content and romp freely in my dreams without having to be rudely awoken by 'you know who.'

Some days, when I see my friend Maggie walking past my house with her Master, I feel sad. Maggie and her family live across the street. She's a cute little rescue mix and we've been like brother and sister since we met. When she walks by, I bark to get her attention. If her human understood me, he'd realize that I want to join them on their walk. I'm ecstatic when they turn to walk up to my fence or front door to greet me.

I love my family and miss them when they leave me alone to run errands or worse, go on vacation. One night, I stayed at Maggie's house when my owners went on a short trip. All night I could only think about my dark and empty house across the street. I could see it! My people had left me!

I was *so* miserable, and I let my caretakers know in no uncertain terms. Nothing they tried could calm my jangled nerves. When morning came, Maggie had had enough of me. I just knew

that I would be going home soon! But when I tried to play with her, Maggie bared her teeth and snarled – such unladylike behavior from my closest friend! She just didn't understand how much I missed my family.

Recently, I heard Mama talking about going away for the weekend. As she packed the car with the family's belongings and loaded my food, leash, and bed, I just knew they were going to take me along. I eagerly jumped into the car. Off we went!

Instead of the road trip I had anticipated, we stopped at the dog sitter's house. After chit-chatting with the sitter, Mama drove off, and left me behind!

Now, mind you, I like my dog sitter. She's taken care of me before for extended periods at my house. She's kind and thoughtful about my well-being. She also has a very attractive female dog whose company I enjoy. But, to think that Mama would leave me behind in a strange house when she went away for the weekend was unforgivable! I planned to escape at the earliest opportunity. That night, I was miserable and restless.

After breakfast the next morning, the sitter gathered my leash as she let her dog out into her yard. What was she thinking? Her dog was off leash, but I was not to be? That was my moment! I dashed past her and ran like the wind. Her frantic "Come back!" quickly receded into the distance. At last, I was free to run!

But, run to where? After encountering so many unfamiliar scents along the way, I finally made it to the Parkway. I recognized the road and surroundings, but riding in a car is VERY different than trotting along the road. Nevertheless, I continued to meander along, all the while sensing that the road would lead me home.

Alas, my freedom was short-lived! Unbeknownst to me, the dog sitter had put out an "all-points bulletin" on the neighborhood blog. As I wandered down the Parkway, I heard a car pull up behind me. Continuing to prance down the road, I glanced casually over my shoulder to see a woman get out of her vehicle.

A few paces further along, I heard the soft cooing of a female voice. I stopped in my tracks. I'm a sucker for the allure of that sweet sound that sometimes emanates from the female of the human species. This beautiful creature was tempting me with my favorite word – "Treat!" – my second greatest weakness. That did it!

I trotted up to her and allowed her to leash me as she handed me a treat. With starry eyes and visions of enjoying more treats, we walked to her car, and I jumped in. Mama had outfitted me with a handsome collar and tag, so I knew our next stop would be at my home.

Alas, no one answered the door. I don't know who was more disappointed – my rescuer or me. Undaunted, we walked to my next-door neighbor's house. Although they knew me well, they were leaving town and could not take me in. That was too bad, as I like their dog, Ollie. Sometimes he's a cranky senior dog, but he tolerates my enthusiastic playfulness.

Off we went to the next neighbor's house. They, too, were unable to care for me but they knew my family would return the following day. They also knew my dog sitter. With a little coaxing on their part, I hopped into their car. Can you guess where they took me?

When I showed up at the sitter's house, she broke into tears. During my absence, she had frantically called Animal Control, issued multiple postings on the neighborhood blog, and received many "Steve" sighting reports. Consequently, my adventure was short-lived.

Mama came home the next day. Hearing of my escapade, she confided to me that the sitter had had a near-nervous breakdown. Humans are strange that way.

Me? Turns out that I'm just a homebody – a happy, go-lucky dog who is more than content to be home again!

The End