



Learn English Through Stories

F Series

F31

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1. The Hundred and One Dalmatians

By Dobie Smith

CHAPTER TEN

What they Saw from the Folly

They travelled through many pretty villages to a countryside wilder than any they had yet seen. There were more woods, fewer farms. "I'm so afraid we may go through our village without knowing it," Pongo said. Suddenly, out of the darkness, came a loud "Miaow". They stopped instantly. Just ahead of them, up a tree, was a tabby cat. She said: "Pongo and Missis? I suppose you are friendly? Some dogs just can't control themselves when they see a cat. You can call me Tib. My real name's Pussy Willow, but that's too long for most people."

"It suits you so well," said Pongo in a tone he had picked up from the Spaniel, "with your slender figure and soft grey paws." The cat was delighted.

"Please tell us if all is still well with our puppies. Could we see them - just a glimpse - before we eat or sleep?" asked Missis.

"It was yesterday afternoon - when I last saw them. Lively as crickets and fat as butter, they were. But you can't see the puppies before they are let out for exercise and that'll be hours yet. Come along and meet the Colonel."

"A human Colonel?" asked Missis, puzzled.

"Bless me, no. The Colonel's our Sheepdog. A perfect master of strategy - you ask the sheep. He calls me his lieutenant. He is spending the night at the Folly. Crazy place, but it's coming in very useful."

Some way ahead of them, a dark mass stood out against the lightning sky. It was a great stone wall. "Your puppies are behind that," said the cat. As they came nearer, Pongo saw that the wall curved.

"You'd think there would be a castle inside that wall," said the cat. "And they do say there was going to be, only something went wrong."

They got through the iron gates and saw the glint of water but it seemed to be black water. Then they saw the reason why. Reflected in it was a black house. Many of the windows in its large flat face had been bricked up and those that were left looked like eyes and a nose, with the front door for a mouth. The

whole face looked distorted. It seemed as if the eyes of the house were staring at them. "Well, that's Hell Hall for you," said the cat. "Well may they call it a Folly!"

The cat miaowed three times and there were three answering barks from inside the tower. An enormous Sheepdog came out. Pongo saw at once that this was an old soldier man, possibly a slow thinker but widely experienced. He led the way into the Folly. The narrow, twisting stairs went up through five floors, most of them full of broken furniture, old trunks and rubbish. On the top floor was a deep bed of straw.

"I shall talk you to sleep," said the Colonel. And he told them the story of the Hell Hall. It had once been an ordinary farm-house named Hill Hall. When the farmer had got into debt, he sold it to an ancestor of Cruella de Vil's, who liked its lonely position. Cruella de Vil had the house painted black. She lets the Baddun brothers have it rent free as caretakers. Those were the last words Pongo and Missis heard, sleep wrapped them round.

An hour later Missis opened her eyes. She heard the puppies barking and dashed to the window. The door to the stable yard opened, and out came a stream of puppies. Surely her puppies could not have grown so much in less than a week? And surely she had not had so many puppies? The whole yard was filling up with fine, large, healthy Dalmatian puppies, but - These puppies were not hers at all! She raised her head in a wail of despair.

Pongo was beside her in a couple of seconds and staring at the yard full of puppies. And then they saw him - smaller, even, than they had remembered. Lucky! There was no mistaking that horseshoe of spots on his back. And after him came Roly Poly, falling over his feet as usual. Then Patch and the tiny Cadpig and all the others.

"Look, Patch is helping the Cadpig to find a place," said Missis, delightedly. "But what does it mean? Where have all those other puppies come from?" Pongo's keen brain had gone into action. He saw it all. Cruella must have begun stealing puppies months before. The largest pups looked at least five months old. Then they went down and down in size. Smallest and youngest of all were his own puppies.

"Well, now you know," said the Sheepdog. "I was hoping you could have had your sleep out first."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

In the Enemy's Camp

The Colonel took Pongo downstairs to have a drink.

"I blame myself for letting you in for this shock," said the Colonel. "When the Lieutenant told me the place was seething with Dalmatian puppies I naturally thought she only meant your puppies. After all, fifteen puppies can do quite a bit of seething. But there are about a hundred puppies there."

Pongo couldn't imagine the Dearlys refusing to help any dog. But getting on for a hundred! Still, the drawing room was very large. "But Colonel," he said, "I could never get the whole lot of them to London."

"Not as they are, of course. They must learn to march, to obey orders."

With this wonderful old Colonel to help him Pongo would rescue every puppy. He found his spirits rising now. Something was puzzling him. "Colonel, why did Cruella steal so many puppies? She can't want more than one Dalmatian fur coat?" The Sheepdog looked astonished. "Surely you know her husband's a furrier? I understand she only married him for his furs."

Pongo found Missis on the bare boards by the window. She had watched until the puppies had all gone in, then fell asleep. He lay down very close to keep her warm.

It was dark when the Colonel woke them. "Let's be moving," he said, "You shall meet your family." A full moon was rising above the black house. "Colonel, what's that on the roof?" said Pongo. "Surely it isn't television - here?"

"Oh, yes, it is. And there's hardly a cottage in the village which hasn't got it."

He outlined his plans, and it soon appeared that television played an important part in them. The Baddun brothers were so fond of it that they could not bear any puppy to bark while it was on. Unless the puppies were warm, they barked like mad. The warmest room in the house was the kitchen - which was where the television set was - so that was where the pups now lived. All this the Colonel had heard from Lucky, during long, barked conversations. "That lad of yours is as bright as a button. He's months ahead of his age," said the Colonel. Pongo and Missis swelled with pride. The plan was that Lucky should bring his brothers and sisters out while the Badduns were watching television.

"But it will be too cold for them to stay out long," said the Colonel. "I see no reason why you shouldn't spend the night in the kitchen. There is no light except the TV screen, the Badduns stay glued to the TV until it ends and then go to sleep." Pongo and Missis thought this was a wonderful idea.

"Can we sleep there every night?" asked Missis. The Colonel said he hoped so and that it was at night that the pups would have to be drilled and trained for their march to London.

The Colonel opened the gate to the stable yard. There stood Lucky, waiting for them. And behind him were all his brothers and sisters. Who could describe what the mother and the father felt during the next few minutes? They tried to be quiet, but there was so much happy snuffling, that the Sheepdog got nervous. "Will they hear in there?" he asked Lucky. "What, the Badduns?" said Lucky - rather indistinctly, because he had his mother's ear in his mouth. "No, they've got their television on extra loud."

"Quiet, now!" said Pongo. "Quiet as mice!" said Missis. They were pleasantly surprised at how quiet the pups instantly were. Only fifteen tails were wagging. "Now, still!" said Lucky. All the tails stopped wagging. "I'm teaching them to obey orders," said Lucky to the Colonel. "Good boy. I make you a Sergeant. Now I'm off to see my little pet, Tommy, have his bath." Lucky took his father and mother in.

It was dark and extremely warm in the kitchen. This was because there was central heating in the house. A strange sight they saw. A few feet away from the television two men lay on old mattresses, their eyes fixed on the screen. Behind them were row after row of puppies, small pups at the front, large pups at the back. Lucky whispered: "Father, are you going to rescue them all?" "I hope so," said Pongo, earnestly - wondering more and more how he was going to manage it. "I told them you would, but they've been pretty nervous. I'll just send a word round that they can count on you." Pongo felt great waves of love and trust rolling towards him. And suddenly all the pups were real and living for him, not just a problem he had to face. He felt as if he were the father of them all.

No one would have guessed that Saul and Jasper Baddun were brothers. Saul was heavy and dark, with a forehead so low that his bushy eyebrows often got tangled with his hair. Jasper was thin and fair, with a chin so sharp and pointed that it had worn holes in all his shirts. Both brothers looked very dirty.

Drowsiness spread throughout the warm, red room. The Baddun brothers dozed. They didn't much like the programme that was on television and wanted to be fresh for their favourite programme, which was due later. Suddenly there was a thunder of thumps on the front door. The sleeping pups awoke in alarm. The door flung open. Outside, against the moonlit sky, stood a figure in a long white cloak. It was Cruella de Vil.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Sudden Danger

For a few seconds, she stared into the dimly lit room. Then she shouted: "Saul! Jasper! Turn off that television! And turn on the light!" "We can't turn on the light because we've no electric bulbs left," said Saul. "Well, turn the sound off, anyway," said Cruella, angrily. "I've got a job for you, my lads. The pups must be killed tonight."

"But they're not big enough to be made into fur coats yet," said Saul.

"The largest ones are, and the little ones can be made into gloves. Anyway, they've got to die - before someone finds them. There's been so much in the papers about the Dearlys' dogs. All England's on the hunt for Dalmatians. My husband is going to ship the skins abroad - except the ones I keep for my own coat. This lot must be got rid of - quickly."

"How?" said the Badduns together.

"Any way you like. Poison them, drown them, hit them on the head. But you must kill them carefully not to damage their skins. Then you can start the skinning. My husband will show you how to do it. I've got to be back to London. Now you'd better get busy. Good night."

Pongo felt stunned. If only he could think! If only the Sheepdog were there to advise him!

"One thing's certain," said Jasper. "We can't do it tonight or we shall miss 'What's my crime?'. It was their favourite television programme. Saul turned the sound on full blast.

"They won't stir for the next half-hour," whispered Lucky. Pongo whispered to Lucky: "March the pups out to the stable yard."

It was remarkable how quickly the pups left the kitchen, under Sergeant Lucky's whispered directions. Pongo and Missis watched the Badduns anxiously, for the hundreds of little toenails made a clitter-clatter on the kitchen floor. But the Badduns had eyes and ears for nothing but television. All that could be done now was to lead the pups to the Folly.

There was not room for ninety-seven pups on the ground floor of the Folly, so Pongo marched everyone out on to the heath. As the last pup marched out,

the Sheepdog arrived. When he heard the facts he praised Pongo highly. "That was Sergeant Lucky's idea," said Pongo proudly. "Good work, Sergeant-Major," said the Colonel. "But where are we to go?" asked Missis. "Look, the puppies are shivering." The Sheepdog thought and said: "Our big barn for the night, anyway. Pups can keep warm in the straw. It's only half a mile across the heath."

Half a mile! How little to Pongo and Missis! How much to the tiny Cadpig! She would never have reached the farm at all if the Sheepdog had not given her a lift. He lay down and she climbed on to his back and held on to his long hair with her teeth.

At last they reached the big barn at the back of the farm where the Colonel lived. The tired pups instantly fell asleep. Pongo, Missis and the Colonel stood at the door, trying to make plans. The Colonel said: "We must get you to London by easy stages, just a few miles a day. I hope to arrange the first stage at once, by Midnight Barking."

"But my smallest daughter is so weak," said Missis. "How can she make any journey?" The Colonel smiled: "I have a plan for her. Now, sleep, sleep, both of you."

They would not have fallen asleep so easily if they had known what the Sheepdog had just seen. Across the heath lanterns were moving. The Badduns were out, searching for the missing puppies.

2. Grammar Page - Tenses

Uses of Present Perfect 1:

Introduction:

Deepa: Have you seen the ski shop that's just opened new branch in the High Street?

Teena: Yes, I have. It has opened it recently, hasn't it? I haven't been in there yet.

Deepa: I went there yesterday. It's really good. Look! I have bought some gloves. It is good for skiing. Have you skied lately or not?

Teena: No, I haven't skied for ages actually. I've got some skis - I've had them for years. I used to ski a lot when I was younger.

Deepa: Where have you gone so far?

Teena: We have been to Austria many times.

Deepa: I've been to Scotland twice, but I've never done any skiing abroad. I'm really looking forward to going to Italy.

A. Happenings in the past that affect or explain the present situation.

1. Deepa looks upset. Has he failed the exam?
2. I can't pay the bus fare. I've lost my purse.
3. I've looked for my watch everywhere but I still can't find it.
4. Teena has discovered that the telephone isn't working.
5. The camera isn't in its usual place. Somebody has taken it away.
6. His father has been away, so he hasn't received his salary yet.
7. She has played volleyball. Now she is sweating.
8. I have cut my finger. Look, it's bleeding.
9. I've passed my driving test, now I can drive mum's car.

B. To denote a completed action in the recent past.

1. I have just finished the work.
2. She has just come from London.
3. I've cleaned my house.
4. She's washed her face — well!