LEVEL 5



Scout's Lonely Hound



Scout was a lion cub who lived in a cozy den at the edge of the woods. Today he got a pet hound. She was a small brown pup with long, soft ears. Scout loved her from the moment he held her in his hands. That night, Scout made her a bed in a box by the wall of the den.



He laid a blanket inside and lifted the pup in. "This is your bed," he said. "Sleep well." But the pup did not sleep. She stood up in the box and cried and cried. Far off in the woods, foxes called, and frogs began to sing by the pond.



Every sound made her cry more. Scout thought she might be hungry. He went to the kitchen and filled one dish with warm milk and one with water. The pup took a few sips and licked her nose. Then she began to cry again. Scout sat down on one of the benches by the door and rubbed his eyes.



It was getting very late. Next, Scout got out his brushes. "Maybe her ears itch," Scout thought. He brushed the pup's ears gently, from top to tip. She wagged her tail for a moment. Then she sat down in her box and cried even louder than before. "Maybe she wants to play," Scout said. He dug through his boxes of toys.



He set out a ball, a rope, a set of little drums, and two toy trucks with bells on them. He tried every game he could think of, even tug with the rope. But the pup just sniffed each toy and pushed it away with her nose. Not one of them helped. Scout sat on the floor and looked at his hound.



She was not hungry. Her ears did not itch. She did not want to play. Then he had a thought. This was her first night away from her mother. The den was new, the box was new, and everything smelled strange. Maybe she just felt lonely. Scout took off his old red shirt.



He had worn it all day, and it smelled just like him. He tucked the shirt into the corner of the box, right next to the pup. She sniffed it once, then twice. Her tail began to wag. She pushed her nose into the soft shirt, curled up in a tight little ball, and shut her eyes.



At last the den was quiet. Scout smiled and gave her a soft pat. "Good night, little pup," he whispered. She did not need dishes or brushes or boxes of toys after all. She just needed to know that Scout was near. Now they could both get some sleep.