

# Duffy

The Tale  
of a Terrier

GARY PORTER



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## PRO-DOGUE

Humans don't have tails. We dogs do. Of course, there are plenty of other differences between us. People walk around on two legs, a vertical approach to life. Ours is a more horizontal take, trotting around on all fours as we do. What I found during my life was there is much we have in common, and nothing about all we share is more important than the love we have for each other. This tale is the story of all that I shared with the two most important humans in my life. You might say that it is the tale of one pooch's life with dog's best friend.



**"Nice to meet you, Rex.  
This may seem like  
a silly question, but  
where in h-e-double-  
hockey sticks am I?"**

**"You're not. In fact,  
it's just the opposite.  
Welcome to paradise."**

# One

## **HEAVEN**

The last mental picture I have from down “there” was of me marching around the vet’s office with this tube sticking out of my leg, all the while dragging around some contraption with a bottle on it. The only way I could have looked sillier was if they had adorned me in one of those hospital gowns, the type open in the back for practical purposes. Though my accompaniments seemed a bit odd, I wasn’t the type to get too lathered up. The worried looks on the faces of my folks told me they felt otherwise.

I should probably say a word or two about my use of the somewhat folksy expression “my folks.” Humans who choose to live with dogs go by many different names. I always cringed at the term “owner” as if we dogs were mere possessions, sort of like an accessory; although of course we have all seen those

## DUFFY

toy dogs who are reduced to a life inside some movie star's handbag. Equally objectionable to me was the term "master" as if we were in servitude to humans. To me, the two people who put a roof over my head were my adoptive parents, affectionately known from here on out in the plural as "my folks" and in the singular as "Mom" and "Dad."

Back to the matter at hand: My only concern was what in the heck had happened to my morning meal. I always took my breakfast bright and early and here it was in the middle of the day and no chow yet. Come to find out, I was being readied for some surgery. I won't burden you with all of the gory details, but some tests showed that I had a nasty lump on my liver that needed to come out.

When I woke up during the night after surgery my surroundings didn't look much like a vet's office. Instead, as far as the eye could see was row after row of bowls filled with every kind of food known to dogkind. Small bits, big bits, bacon bits—you name it—all you had to do was walk down the rows and pick out whatever tickled your fancy. And the biggest barrel of rawhides you could imagine.

Where could this be?

Where were my folks?

Well, it didn't take me long to figure out that I



## HEAVEN

was somewhere quite different than that vet's office.

In the end, I didn't survive the "post-op." All went well during the surgery to remove the lump but, sometime during the night in the recovery room, my heart just gave out. I suppose that meeting my maker in this fashion was a bit ironic since I had been giving out my heart to my folks my whole life.

Never mind where I was. I was famished. I dug into the biggest helping of chow I had ever seen, only coming up for air once I licked the bowl clean. Having satisfied my most basic of needs, I turned back to consider my current surroundings. I began to realize where I wasn't. This wasn't the kind of place where I had spent my first fourteen years. I know humans are fond of naming everything. And whatever name you might give to this place, I was definitely somewhere quite different now.

As part of my daily ritual I gave myself a good licking, a dog's version of a morning shower. With that bit of personal hygiene out of the way, I trotted over to find a comfortable spot in the shade of a big oak tree. Normally I would have been out like a light within minutes. Instead I was wide awake. Let's face it. Already I missed these two humans with whom I had spent nearly my entire life.

The idea kept coming back to me. I needed to put

## DUFFY

my thoughts about my life down on paper. Certainly that would have been something I wasn't capable of down there, but up here there seemed to be no boundaries. And the more I considered it, the more I realized that I needed to tell my life's story and get it in the hands of my folks. After all our years together I knew that my leaving must have been one of the toughest things they ever faced.

About this time, up trots a very handsome member of my own species.

"Well, hello there, old chap! Welcome to paradise!"

"Thank you. The name is Duffy, but friends call me Duff."

"Pleased to meet you, Duff. I'm Rex."

"Nice to meet you, Rex. I know this may seem like a silly question, and pardon the vernacular, but where in the h-e-double-hockey sticks *am* I?"

"You're not," Rex replied.

"I'm sorry, but what did you say?" I asked, puzzled.

"You are nowhere in hell. In fact, just the opposite and, as I said, welcome to paradise. You obviously led a good life. And by that I do mean *a* good life, not *the* good life. Too often, it is leading *the* good life that lands so many poor souls down below rather than up

## HEAVEN

here," he explained, nodding his head slightly down and then up.

Catching my breath, I gave some thought to what Rex said and then I realized my suspicions were correct. I was no longer on Earth and had entered somewhere quite different. Quite different indeed.

Rex said he would be glad to show me around later and even help me find my birth mother, someone I hadn't seen since a few weeks after I came into the world. As daunting a task as that seemed to me at the time, he explained how easy it would be, and that this was only one of the many amazing things about this place.

Turns out Rex and I were related. He a Boston Terrier, me a Terrier mix. The years in the afterlife had been good to Rex. He had the shiniest coat I had ever seen on a dog. Rex attributed this to the top-of-the-line dog food he ate from the first day he arrived up here. Combine the shiny coat with the distinctive black-and-white coloring of his breed, and he looked like he was dressed for his own wedding. He even had a tail to go with his tuxedo, though it was a curly little appendage. Rex had an air of confidence and nobility about him.

"So, Rex, I want to write my life's story and send it in a letter to my folks back on Earth. I know that

## DUFFY

may seem a bit far-fetched but do you know of any way to make that happen?"

"Well, to be honest, old chap, there are few constraints on anything one wants to do up here. But wouldn't your folks already know your life story? I assume you lived with them for most of your life, did you not?"

"We had thirteen years together, the three of us. But you have to understand, I was adopted and there were parts of my life, leading up to my rescue, that they had no way of knowing about. Let's just say I had a *ruff* start in life and I would like to let my folks know just how appreciative I was that they rescued me and loved me unconditionally for the rest of my life. If only I could reassure them that I have landed in a safe place up here."

"So you spent some time in a shelter, did you, Duff? I've heard some horror stories about those places."

The way Rex emphasized *those places* made me wonder exactly what it was he knew about shelters.

"Yeah, I sure did. But this shelter wasn't so bad. The people there treated me well and did everything they could to find me a permanent home. Still, I can't tell you what a relief it was the day I left for my new home. I just know the folks must be grieving

## HEAVEN

something awful after all our time together. I was thinking my letter might help them with the healing process.”

“Catharsis,” Rex responded.

“Ca....what?” I turned to him in complete bewilderment.

“Catharsis. That’s what humans call it when they find ways to cope with the grieving process. You think your letter to your folks would be cathartic to them.”

I was beginning to understand that my new friend was no ordinary dog. Here was a learned canine, one with a vocabulary to match his formal black-and-white attire.

“Yes, yes. I want to help them with their catharsis,” I replied, trying my best to keep pace with Rex.

“I can understand your motivation, Duff. But why not take it a step further and put this story of yours down in a book, one that could be shared with everyone down there, not just your folks?”

“Gosh, Rex, I never thought of that. Why would I want to share my life’s story with the entire human race?”

“Duff, take a long look around you. See those rows and rows of chow, the kind that I assume you gorged yourself on, the same thing all the dogs do on their arrival. You need to understand that we operate

## DUFFY

up here on a communal system, everyone pitching in to do their parts.”

“So what does any of this have to do with me writing a book, Rex?” So far I wasn’t sure how to connect the dots on what the old boy was trying to tell me.

“Royalties. You sell your book and you get a percentage of the take. Royalties. They could be your meal ticket. Literally.”

I knew little about royalties but with the mere mention of the word *meal* I reacted in a way you might expect from Pavlov’s dog. Now, Rex had my undivided attention. But still I had doubts about my literary leanings.

“Rex, to be perfectly honest, I know nothing about writing a book. I am confident I could tell my story, but who in their right mind would publish a book written by a dog? And, even if I was a human, and it is pretty obvious I am not, don’t most of the two-leggeds who write books eventually have to hook up with an agent? Where in the world—sorry, I mean *Heaven*—would I find an agent?”

Rex just stared at me with those bug-like eyes that make his breed so distinctive. Then he gave me a look that I will never forget. I was going to say one I will never forget even if I live to be a hundred, but then

## HEAVEN

I caught myself. All the while he just kept staring at me until I finally asked him somewhat indignantly what was so peculiar about my question regarding an agent. His answer made perfectly good sense.

“Think about it, Duff. Haven’t you ever heard that all of the good agents are from out East? And though New York might beg to differ, don’t you suppose some of the very best are from Boston?”

I had found my perfect partner in the form of Rex the Boston Terrier in the dapper black-and-white tuxedo. Or so I thought. Before very long, it became evident that Rex wanted to be more than just my agent.