

## Wendy

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Of course I knew other dogs – there were plenty roaming the streets around where we lived. Most of them were wary of me, and would bark, or growl on my approach – something my Mum had warned me not to do. Wendy was different. She was black and brown, had long floppy ears, was very gentle and always full of fun, and I loved her. We only saw her infrequently – on visits to 'Aunty' Jane's, but Wendy always remembered us and made a great fuss whenever we turned up with Mum & Dad for Sunday tea. Sometimes my Big Sister and I were allowed to take her for a walk in the park on a lead, although on one of the occasions that I had insisted on holding the lead, Wendy, despite her small size, had pulled me over in her enthusiasm to explore.

Then it happened. Without any warning, on one of these visits Wendy didn't come running and barking down the garden path of 'Aunty' Jane's house – in fact Wendy was nowhere to be seen. I had asked my 'Aunt' where she was, and with a sad face, she answered that Wendy had died and gone to Heaven. When I asked if I would ever see her again, I was told that if I was good, I would see her when I went to Heaven. I cried – a lot.

In the following weeks, the hurt I felt for the loss of Wendy became more bearable, and at times I stopped thinking about her altogether. It was summer, and I played out in the street with the kids of my own age. Then during the school holidays, there were even more boys to play with, including an older boy named Tim, who had 'adopted' me and who looked after me, despite all of the rough and tumble in the dirty back streets where we lived.

There had been one day when Tim had took my hand, and we had followed the other boys along the street and onto 'The Quarry'. This was simply a large area of waste ground – I don't suppose for one minute there had ever been a real quarry there. The boys ahead had stopped and began poking something on the ground with their sticks. As we approached them I gasped, and involuntarily put my hand over my mouth and nose. A stench, so awful and unfamiliar rose up from what appeared to be a bag of matted fur on the ground. The bag heaved and trembled with a life of its own, and small white maggots crawled in and out of the ears, nose and mouth of what looked vaguely like a dogs head. Still with my face covered, I tugged on Tim's hand and asked: 'What is it?'

'A dead dog' he replied.

'A dead dog?' I repeated.

'Yes, a dog that has died'

'Has it been a bad dog?'

A note of irritation had crept into his voice: 'No, it's just dead, that's all'.

I stood & stared at this foul abomination with a very real horror.

Eventually the boys tired of poking the corpse, and falling into line with sticks over their shoulders, marched off, with Tim and I in the rear. Two or three of the older boys kept time with their favourite marching song:

*Yellow matter custard,  
Green snot pie,  
All mixed together,  
In a dead dog's eye  
Get a slice of bread,  
Spread it on thick,  
And wash it down your belly  
With a hot cup of sick*