

NUBLU

The main character of this story is a small white dog with brown patches, who can claim as his very own, a tail long enough to thump the ground. Here you see the little dog. From the front, from the back, and from the side.

“Ruff, ruff,” barked the little dog when he first met firefighter Blackbird, and wagged his tail so enthusiastically that Blackbird’s companion firefighter Whitley, questioned:

“I wonder what he wants?”

“He’s asking for food,” replied Blackbird, suggesting that he understood the language of dogs.

Here you see the firefighters Blackbird and Whitley. Again, from the front, from the back, and from the side.

And, because their fellow firefighters and the red firetruck also have a big role in this story, please take a good look at them as well!

Did you get a good look? Okay. Now you can get to the real story.

An Unexpected Visitor

In a part of town with busy traffic, between two wide streets, stood the fire hall. On the second and third floors of the fire hall were rooms for the firefighters, but on the ground floor, behind high doors that swung open like gates, were parked bright red fire trucks, ready to rush out at the first sound of a wailing siren.

On the day that our story begins, the red fire trucks had left the fire hall. Maybe someone in a wooden building left a stove unattended - unfortunately this kind of carelessness does happen. Maybe in a tall stone building someone left a hot iron on the ironing board - this kind of carelessness also happens. In any event, the help of firefighters was needed. Now they were back at the fire hall and set about drying their wet hoses.

There was a tall tower in the corner of the yard for drying fire hoses. Towers like this can be found in the yards of most fire halls, and whoever has believed up to now that these were watch towers is sadly mistaken. To get the water to run out of the long fire hoses, they have to be hoisted up, and it is best to do this in a tall tower.

Firefighters Blackbird and Whitley had just hung an armload of wet hoses to dry and were preparing to do the same with the next armload, when they noticed the little dog lapping at the water on the concrete floor of the tower.

The firefighters stopped to look at the dog.

"Looks like a doxie," said Blackbird, "then again maybe not."

"Could be a hunting hound," said Whitley, " then again maybe not."

They were both right - or maybe not. True, the dog had the short bow legs of a dachshund and a dachshund's long, strong tail. But it also had the short snout of a hound, a hound's round head, and patches on its back like a hound.

"He is what he is," exclaimed Blackbird. "That's his own business. Let's get these last hoses hung up to dry."

They finished at exactly the same time - that is, the men finished their work, and the dog finished lapping water. And just then it happened that the dog lifted his snout in the direction of the firefighters and barked.

It was a clear, resounding bark.

"What do you think he wants?" wondered Whitley.

Blackbird knew.

"He says he wants something to eat," replied Blackbird and stooped to pick up the little dog who from the bottom was a dachshund and from the top a hunting hound.

As it turns out, the entire ground floor of the fire hall wasn't only for fire trucks. There was also a kitchen. And it was toward the kitchen that Blackbird headed.

The cook, dressed in a white chef's jacket, was arranging his pots and pans, but when he saw that he had visitors, he stopped what he was doing.

"See, this is the thing," said Blackbird. "We've already had a drink. But we could use something to eat too."

Even though Blackbird had said "we", the cook understood that it was the dog that needed something to eat.

"Does he eat porridge?" asked the cook.

"Ruff!" barked the dog.

"Yes. He says he does," declared Blackbird.

"But does he drink milk?"

"Ruff!" replied the dog.

"Yes. He says he does."

Screech scratch, the cook scraped up porridge from the bottom of the pot.

Glug-glug-glug, he poured milk from the jug. Then he had another question.

"Wonder what his name is?" asked the cook.

Blackbird scratched the dog behind his ear

"Hey, doggie! This nice man wants to know what your name is."

"Ruff!" Said the dog. And Blackbird declared happily:

"He says his name is Nublu."

The cook didn't have any more questions. The one with a question still on his lips was Whitley, but he waited until the dog finished eating and was taken back outside.

"That's strange," considered Whitley. "Of course I don't doubt that you, Blackbird, understand the dog's language. But how do you explain that at first "Ruff" meant "I want porridge," then - "I want milk", and lastly that his name is Nublu? If he were to bark a fourth time, what could that possibly mean?"

As if on command, the dog barked once again.

"Now it means, why is this Whitley fussing out here when he should be in the kitchen peeling potatoes," explained Blackbird. Leaving his fellow firefighter behind, he ran off with the dog towards the gate.

Next to the big, two sided gate where the red fire trucks come and go was another smaller gate. Blackbird pushed the little gate open and put the dog down outside the gate.

The dog slowly tilted his head to one side and observed the fire fighter with his round black eyes.

"So there, Nublu," said Blackbird. "You have a full belly and you feel pretty good. Run along now, surely they're waiting for you at home. Go Nublu! Home!"

Having said this, Blackbird was about to close the gate. But the hinges barely had a chance to creak when the dog darted through the firefighter's legs and raced back into the familiar yard.

Blackbird found the little rascal by the tower where they had first met. The dog had stuck his snout into some kind of hole and was digging so that sand went flying.

"What is this supposed to mean?" asked Blackbird. "Why did you run back? Does this mean you don't have a home to go to?"

"Ruff!" replied the dog lifting his snout. "Ruff! Ruff!"

"He says that he doesn't," muttered Blackbird.

"So you have decided to stay here?"

"Yip, yip!" answered the dog.

"He says that he has," muttered Blackbird.

He pushed his cap back on his head and mused. He also liked this yard and this building very much. It wasn't at all surprising that the dog wanted to stay here. But had he thought the decision through?

"We have strict rules around here," said Blackbird sternly.

"Ruff!" said Nublu to show that strict rules didn't scare him.

"Training every day..."

"Ruff, ruff, ruff!" barked Nublu enthusiastically as he scampered around Blackbird.

"Shush!" said Blackbird waving his arms. "Not so loud!" But his voice wasn't at all commanding. In fact it seemed that Blackbird was enjoying the dog's frolicking, and Nublu, picking up on this, frolicked even more enthusiastically.

When firefighter Whitley finished peeling potatoes and decided to go to the TV lounge to read the newspapers, to his great surprise he came upon a procession in the corridor of the second floor, led by a dog with patches on his back. Next to the dog, at his service, pattered a short, robust firefighter whom Whitley recognised as his friend Blackbird. Following them, chuckling cheerfully, came the rest of the station's firefighters.

Blackbird pushed the door open.

"This is the firefighter's workshop," announced Blackbird from the doorway where a carpenter's bench and a drilling machine could be seen.

"This is where the firemen rest," he announced opening another door.

"And there," cracking open a third door, "is the place where hands and ears are washed".

The hound-like little dog nodded and wagged his tail following each explanation.

It was obvious that he was enjoying all the attention he was getting.

At one point he even let out a small bark which Blackbird translated as:

"He says that this room hasn't been dusted."

The procession had just reached the third floor of the fire hall when suddenly the entire building was filled with the sound of ringing bells. Bells rang out in the corridors, bells rang out in all the rooms. Even outside in the yard bells rang out, frightening off a flock of pigeons. Nublu didn't see how the two-sided doors of the garage opened. He didn't see the man wearing a uniform run out and push open the gate that led to the street. He did see, however, that all the firefighters ran to some kind of closet and disappeared one by one. The closet swallowed firefighter Blackbird and firefighter Whitley. The closet swallowed the entire cohort, who just moments earlier had been praising the little dog and patting him on the head. Nublu had no intention of being left behind by his new friends. Yipping and yapping he took off after them.

A second later he had to dig all sixteen of his claws into the floor. Lucky for him that he could come quickly to a sudden stop, just as he could quickly gain full speed. It wasn't a closet that his friends had jumped into. It was a deep hole with a limbless tree growing out of it.

Whimpering, Nublu stretched out to see down into the hole. His nose told him that his friends were down there. His ears confirmed this. And because he wasn't a squirrel who could shimmy down a smooth tree, he dashed off to find the stairs.

He reached the garage in the nick of time. The big red truck was already moving. But the door through which Nublu could see his new friend was still open a crack. Without hesitation, Nublu sprang with his short bow legs and flew like a bullet into the cabin and quickly scurried under the bench. Despite being just a young pup, he wasn't at all a stupid dog. He understood that it wasn't polite to ride along without being invited. But since he was already on board, it was best to lay low for a while.

You've probably figured out what the piercing bell that rang out at the fire hall was for. It was a fire alarm. A fire had broken out somewhere. This information traveled through the telephone wires to the communications headquarters of the fire station where the always alert dispatcher pressed his finger on the electric button to ring the bell.

The firefighters immediately stopped whatever they were doing. Without wasting any time they rushed to the trucks, and surely you noticed that they didn't take the stairs. The closet that Nublu almost tumbled into wasn't a closet at all. And the tree that grew up through the floors of the fire station wasn't a tree. It was a pole that reached through all the floors and ceilings down into the garage, and by sliding down this smooth pole, the firefighters could quickly reach the firetrucks. Less than a minute after the alarm sounded, the red fire trucks were already racing to the scene of the fire, the firefighters meanwhile pulling on their protective jackets and pants that were ready and waiting on the truck seats.

By the time the men began to pull on their helmets, Nublu had forgotten that he had jumped onto the truck without permission. The legs of Blackbird's canvas pants were dangling right under his snout. Nublu grabbed one of the pant legs in his teeth and gave it a little tug.

This naughtiness did not go unnoticed by Blackbird.

"Oho!" declared Blackbird. "Seems to me that we have a rabbit on board."

But of course he was mistaken, as we already know. It wasn't a rabbit. It was a dog named Nublu.

And so it happened that Nublu rode along with the firefighters to put out the fire. I would be exaggerating if I said that Nublu was a big help in putting out the fire. But I can't say that he didn't take any part in the firefighters' work. When the firehoses were spread out, Nublu grabbed hold and helped to pull. When the firehoses were being coiled, he was ready to spread them out again. And when a little boy wanted to get too close to the firefighters, he barked at him sharply, and rightfully so, because little boys really shouldn't interfere with the work of firefighters.

Blackbird was quite satisfied with Nublu. When the red fire trucks returned to the fire hall, Blackbird praised the dog to the firechief, the little dog with legs like a dachshund and the snout of a hunting hound. At the same time Whitley was in the kitchen wheedling the cook to give the newest team member a special reward.

Nublu didn't pay any attention to the outpouring of admiration. Quickly-quickly moving his bow legs, he snooped around the garage and looked in on the workshops and lecture hall.

"A natural talent... born to be a firefighter..." his left ear caught Blackbird's voice, but at the same time the voice flew out from his right ear.

Of course Nublu didn't know that the conversation was about him.

