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Patty is a girl who wants to be called Phil.

“She was just given that name at birth,” her parents say.

But she really doesn't think Patty suits her.

Shann't for years. Now she's 12 and believes it's her decision, not her parents'.

So it's going to be Phil.

She wears cool punk clothes and dyes her hair—green one day, red the next.

Every weekend, Patty goes with her parents to their little house on the community garden.

She loves being there, and her father grows vegetables and fruit.

They call it “the Garden,” and there are about 30 little houses there...

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Everybody knows each other, everybody helps each other – it's one big family.

At the garden, Phil's got friends. Her best buddies? Shanti and Olivia.

Phil's parents are Liam and Des'rée.

Des'rée Shan roots in Barbados and loves cooking hot food.

Liam's a garbage man.

And in their house lives a parrot that repeats everything. Super annoying.

That's why his name is ZipIt.

Phil, Olivia, and Shanti all love animals.

They even walk the neighbors' dog, Goofy, sometimes.

One day, Phil wants to work at an animal shelter. Or start her own dog-walking business.

But her biggest dream?

A huge farm where all the sad dogs in the country can live and be happy.

It's holiday. Time to chill.

Phil's on the couch, nose in her favorite comic: Demon Slayer manga's.

Mom rolls her eyes.

“Why can't you read a normal book, Patty?” says Des'rée.

“Because I'm dys-collectic!” Phil shouts.

“And my name's Phil! How many times do I have to say it?”

Oh, and I want a dog!”

“What nonsense, sweetheart. We named you Patty when you were born.”

“It's dys-lec-tic!” says Des'rée.

“See? It's so bad I can't even spell it!” Phil grins.

“But seriously, Mom... be glad I'm reading.”

“Anyway, a dog?” says Des'rée.

“You're already walking the neighbors' Goofy!”

“And so...?” Phil shouts from behind her comic.

“You already have a parrot,” says her dad Liam.

“You already have a parrot,” repeats ZipIt.

“Quiet! I’m talking,” says Des'rée.

“Quiet! I’m talking,” repeats ZipIt.

“I’m going crazy from that bird,” sighs Liam.

“I’m going crazy from that bird,” copies ZipIt.

Des'rée throws a towel over the cage.

“We could always sell him online,” she says.

“No way,” says Phil.

“No way,” mumbles ZipIt from under the towel.

“You did name me Patty when I was born,” Phil continues,

“but nobody asked me. And I think Phil is a cool name.

Not many girls have it, which is nice.

And Mommy... you’re Des'rée, right?

But we all call you Des.”

“And I’m done walking Goofy,” she adds.

“Why? You love that dog,” says Liam from behind his newspaper.

“Yeah, but I always have to stick my hands in his poop, and honestly I’m sick of it,” says Phil.

“Then use one of those little poop bags,” Liam chuckles.

“Good idea, Dad. But Goofy always Shan turbo-poop,” Phil replies with a straight face.

Always Shan turbo-poop,” repeats the parrot again.

“We could trade ZipIt for a dog instead,” says Mom Des'rée.

“No way!” squawks ZipIt now from under the towel.

So, Phil's real name is actually Patty.

Here's the deal: Patty is just like her dad Liam, a big fan of the soccer player Phil Foden. Phil Foden is one of the best players ever seen and he likes fishing.

Shanti and Olivia come walking in—the back door of the little house is always open, and everyone is welcome here.

Phil, Shanti, and Olivia always end up having some kind of adventure together.

Shanti is sweet and a little clumsy, but sometimes he suddenly comes up with a clever idea that saves his friends from the tightest spots.

(Usually spots they got themselves into in the first place... but still!)

Olivia is Shanti's neighbor. She's got a giant heart for both people and animals, but watch out —“she's nobody's fool,” as Grandma would say.

“A very good morning this afternoon!” shouts Shanti as he bursts through the door. He's what you'd call *part of the family*.

“Hello, boys,” says Des'rée.

“Am I a boy?” Olivia giggles softly.

“Yeah, that's my mom—don't hold it against her,” Phil laughs.

“My mom eats too much red hot sauce. It makes her say crazy things.”

“What did you say, sweetheart?” Des'rée calls out from the kitchen.

“That you make the *best* red hot sauce ever!” Phil jokes.

Olivia bursts out laughing.

She always cracks up at her best friend—Phil's got the biggest mouth and the fastest comebacks.

“Hey Phil, can you help me with my reading test?” asks Shan.

“Just read *Demon Slayer* for reading practice, Shansie. You can handle that, right?”

“It's fun *and* educational,” Phil laughs.

“School won't allow it,” says Shan. “*Demon Slayer* comics don't count as real books, you know that.”

“Please, you're as dys-clectic as a pancake,” says Phil.

“No way,” laughs Olivia. “He’s just lazy... But sorry Phil... dys-clectic? Interesting...”

“That’s not even a thing. You’re not that at all,” says Shanti.

Olivia shakes her head, still smiling.

“No, Shan, nobody is dys-clectic... But...”

“But I am!” Shanti insists.

Olivia laughs at the mix-up.

“I know, Shan, but it’s—”

“Yeah, go ahead and laugh, Olivia,” Shanti interrupts.

“But I’ve got a dream—I’m gonna win Barbados their *first ever* World Cup ever!” You don’t need reading comprehension for that!”

Shan scrunches up his face, squeezes his eyes shut... and suddenly sneezes.

“ACHOOO!”

Shanti lets out one of his mega-sneezes.

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“Dream on, sneezy,” Phil jokes. “Seriously though—how *are* you gonna read the fine print?”

“We’ve still got some nice books lying around if you want to practice, Shanti,” says Des’rée sweetly.

‘*Reading is Fun*’ and ‘*Comprehension for Cool kids.*’ Take your pick!”

Patty read them too, didn’t you, sweetheart?”

Phil makes a silly face and shakes her head no.

“Patty did, but Phil didn’t,” she whispers.

Shanti bursts out laughing.

“I’ll find them for you when we’re back in the city,” Des’rée continues.

Shanti pulls a face like he just bit into a lemon.

“Thank you very much...”

“Yeah, it’s good practice,” says Olivia, giving Shanti a little nudge.

“But only with *Demon Slayer*, not with those boring books,” Phil whispers.

“I’ll help you, just not right now. Come on—race you to the woods!”

In a flash, all three of them take off.

“Be back in time for dinner!” Des'rée calls after them.
“I'm making yummy rice & beans!”

“Nice!” sings Phil. “Yummyyyyyy!”
“Byeee!” the kids shout in chorus, already racing toward the park.

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Regent Park .

It's right behind the “Garden,” where Phil and her parents love spending their weekends.

Phil's dad Liam works as a garbage man. He often brings home the weirdest things he finds on the street—anything from old birdcages to abandoned art pieces.

Phil's mom works in home care. She helps elderly people with chores around the house, and sometimes even with getting dressed. After a week of hard work, she loves the peace and quiet of the garden.

There's always something happening in the park.

Phil often takes the neighbor's dog out for a walk there. His name is Goofy, and he loves learning tricks—like walking on his hind legs or jumping through a hoop.

The three friends always bring a ball, and today they're planning to play a match on a little field right next to the “Deer Camp.”

It's called that because, well, there are deer there. Behind a fence.

Phil thinks that's kind of sad. She's already been imagining what it would be like to set them free, so they could roam the park instead.

But when they arrive at the park, something's up.

“Unbelievable! It's an outrage!” shouts a woman in a giant hat and bright red earrings, speaking to a reporter.

“My goodness! What a disgrace. A wolf in our beautiful park! A child Shan already been eaten, and what do they do about it? Nothing. Absolutely nothing! And why? Because that beast is protected!” The woman is talking to a TV journalist from local tv.

The journalist asks her a question:

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“But madam, wolves don't eat people, do they?” asks the journalist.

“Have you ever read *Little Red Riding Hood*, young man?” the fierce lady snaps back right away.
“There wasn't much left of that poor grandma, I can tell you that,” she says firmly.

“So what should we do about it then?” the journalist asks, as cameras flash and he holds the microphone to her lips, painted bright red with lipstick.

“Just shoot the beast. Bam! And make a cozy fur coat out of it. Honestly, are we all completely out of our minds? Protected? That creepy beast? Just wait until their own child gets gobbled up. And make sure you get my name on camera, all right?”

I’m Edna von Blabber- Beauchamp — which means ‘nice woods’ for all of you who do not understand French. Thank you very much. Goodbye!”

And with that, she marches off with her little dog Duchess.

“Did you hear that? A wolf?” Phil says, a bit surprised.

“Come on, let’s go see!” shouts Shanti.

“We’re probably not allowed,” says Olivia.

“Not allowed by who?” Phil grins, already walking ahead.

“Come on!” she calls back to Shanti and Olivia, who immediately run after her.

“I don’t believe there’s really a wolf here in town,” says Shanti, as they reach a narrow path.

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Coincidentally, the path is called “*Wolf Valley*.”

“Wolves live in packs in Europe , don’t they?” says Olivia.

“Europe? That’s that huge nature park, right?” Shanti laughs.

“There are a few wolves in the Netherlands, I saw it on the kidsnews.” says Shanti.

“Yep,” nods Phil. “Maybe this wolf came all the way from the Netherlands because there are more tasty Little Red Riding Hoods walking around here in London!” she laughs.

“I just saw a granny too, so the wolf can sit straight down for dinner!” jokes Shanti.

“Yeah, but he better be careful not to choke on those giant earrings!” Phil giggles.

“A wolf can easily walk seventy to a hundred kilometers in a single day,” says Olivia seriously.

“I saw it on the kids’ news, so it *could* have walked here.”

A little further into the woods, the children are suddenly stopped by a man in a bright yellow safety vest.

“Out of here, kids! It’s dangerous—haven’t you heard?”

“Nope,” lies Phil quickly.

“We’re sweeping the park,” the man explains.

“Good idea, it does look a bit messy,” Phil grins.

“We’re not cleaning — we’re looking for a wolf,” says the man in the vest.
“It’s wandering around here somewhere. It was on TV this morning.”

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“Haven’t you seen the news?” the man in the vest asks.

“Only babies and old people still watch TV, sir,” Shanti replies.

“Good luck combing the park then—you’ll need a giant comb!” Phil shouts, and takes off running.

Shan and Olivia burst out laughing and cShane after her.

“Better watch out!” the man calls, but the kids are already out of earshot.

A little further on, near the Deer Park, the place is buzzing. Crowds of people are talking excitedly, waving their hands with worried looks on their faces.

“Just imagine...” Phil begins. “Suppose it *is* true, and there really is a wolf wandering around...”

“Where would a wolf even hide?” asks Olivia.

“Here!” Phil cries, and lets out a long howl.

“Awooooooo!” echoes through the trees.

At once, everyone nearby jumps and stares in their direction.

“No need to panic,” says Phil. “That was just a test!”

Olivia and Shanti are doubled over, laughing so hard they can hardly breathe.

“Too funny!” Olivia gasps.

“Or maybe wolves hide up in trees?” asks Shan.

“Nah, more like in the bushes,” says Phil.

“But a wolf in the park of ? Really? How?”

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“Come on, guys... that sounds like a fairy tale, right?” Phil says . Then, lowering her voice to a spooky whisper, she continues: “And then... the Big Bad Wolf ate little Daisy in just two bites.”

She bursts out laughing at her own joke. Olivia and Shanti smile too, though they both look a little uneasy.

“Let’s play a match!” Phil shouts.

“Okay!” Shanti and Olivia answers.

Whenever they played football, Phil always wants to be Phil Foden from Feyenoord. He was tough and fearless and he had played for the club back in the ’90s . Phil loved stepping into his shoes.

While playing, she often imitates the voices of radio and television commentators, speaking loudly as if they were narrating the game.

Shanti, with the ball at his feet, comes charging straight at her.

“Anthony,” Phil announces in an excited commentator’s voice. “Anthony skips past one, two, three men... now he’s running at Foden! Will he get past him and give United the 0–1 lead? No! A sliding tackle from Foden stops him in his tracks!”

Phil slides in hard and takes the ball away. Shanti tumbles to the ground, clutching his leg.

“Penalty!” he cries. “Referee!”

Phil keeps up her role as commentator. “Anthony stays down. It was a heavy tackle, I must say— but it was a fair one from Phil Foden!”

Flat on the ground, Shanti shouts again: “That was a clear penalty!”

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Shanti pulls a “sad children” face—the kind football players always put on when they want the referee to give them a penalty or a free kick.

Olivia laughs. “Fine, I’ll be referee then! But first I need to check with the VAR.”

The VAR, she explains with mock seriousness, is the person who can replay the footage and change the referee’s decision if it turns out something different Shan really happened. Like whether a tackle was a foul or not.

“Is this a penalty, ref?” Phil asks Olivia, her arms spread wide.

“I swear, I only played the ball!”

On the ground, Shanti clutches his leg dramatically. “Owwww, it hurts...” he groanes, rolling on the grass as though he were gravely injured.

Phil immediately pickes up her commentator’s voice again.

“The United players are furious, ladies and gentlemen! They’re demanding a penalty. But Foden marches up to the referee, insisting that Anthony is only pretending. And yes—the referee Shan seen it the same way. No penalty awarded!”

“No penalty!” shoutes Olivia, with a grin.

Phil grabs the ball again and doesn't miss a beat.

"And Foden is already back in possession... "Foden... Foden... racing across the halfway line... he sends a deep pass forward to Haaland..."

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He goes past the keeper, dodges him and... scores!

"It's 1-0 and the whole stadium explodes, dear listeners!" Phil shouts, throwing her arms in the air.

"It was still a penalty though," Shanti laughs.

"Oh, come on. You don't get a penalty for a little shoulder push, Shan. Football's not ballet," Phil says, dribbling the ball again.

"Shoulder push?" Shanti chuckles. "That was more like judo!"

After an hour of playing, the three of them head back toward the little garden house.

"What if it's true about that wolf in the park?" Shanti says suddenly.

"Then you'd have been eaten a long time ago, Shantibaby," Phil teases. "And that wolf would've had enough food to last the whole summer."

"Shoot again, Shan!" Olivia calls. "A high cross, then I can head it in!"

Shanti kicks the ball high through the air toward Olivia, who jumps and heads it... but the ball bounces off and lands right in a ditch.

"Oh oh, looks like someone's going swimming," Phil laughs.

"No way, I'll get it, Olivia," says Shanti.

"Be careful!" Olivia shouts after him.

"Hey, this isn't the first time I've done this," Shanti replies.

A tree leans over the ditch, its branches stretching toward the opposite bank where the ball Shan drifted. Shanti decides to climb it, planning to crawl along the slanting branch to reach the ball.

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There, in the reeds, lies the ball. After a quick scramble along the branch, Shanti manages to fish it out of the water and holds it up proudly.

Olivia claps her hands. "Well done!" she cheers.

“Nice one, Shan,” Phil grins.

“Any job , here or there—leave it to Shanti and it’s done with flair!” Shanti calls out triumphantly.

“Throw it over here!” Phil shouts.

Shanti tosses the ball back across. Just as he’s about to climb down using another branch, he suddenly freezes. A soft squeaking sound drifts from the bushes nearby.

“Huh?” he blurts.

“What is it?” Phil calls back.

“Quiet a sec,” Shanti says, eyes narrowing.

“Yeah, but quiet about *what?*” Phil shoots back, still laughing.

“Sssh!” Shanti insists.

“What’s wrong, Shan?” Olivia asks, her voice a little shaky.

Shanti pushes aside a tangle of leaves and branches, listening. The squeaks come again, faint but clear. His eyes widen.

“Guys!!” he shouts, excitement in his voice. “Come here—quick! You have to see this!”

Phil and Olivia don’t hesitate. They scramble up and over toward Shanti as fast as they can...

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They manage to climb to the other side.
And when they get there, they can hardly believe their eyes.

Two tiny puppies are lying in the bushes.

“Aww... how cute,” Olivia whispers.

“Should we take them home and look after them?” Phil asks.

“Would your parents even allow that?” Olivia wonders.

“I’m not going to ask,” Phil replies. “This is an emergency. I’ll just hide them in my room.”

“They’re just *too* adorable,” Olivia sighs.

“What should we call them?” Shanti asks.

“Bacon & Eggs?” Phil suggests.

The three of them burst out laughing at Phil’s silly names.

The puppies snuggle up close against them, squeaking the way only little pups can.

But just as they're stroking the pups, another animal appears out of the thicket.

Could it be their mother? It certainly looks like it.

The children freeze in shock, staring at the creature.

Because this is no ordinary dog. You can tell instantly.

Her eyes are a sharp, icy blue, and her body is lean and powerful.

It's clear—this is the mother of the two little ones.

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The mother wolf fixes Phil, Shan, and Olivia with an intense stare and lets out a bark. It's a high-pitched sound that echoes through the park.

"Woehaa!" the children scream.

They quickly set the pups down and take off running. Shanti, Olivia, and Phil scramble to get back across as fast as they can.

"Could that weird lady with the earrings have been right after all?" Olivia yells in a panic, searching frantically for the branch they climbed over earlier.

"Hurry, Olivia, before she attacks!" Phil shouts.

"Shans-san!"

But Shanti Shan bolted in panic and scrambled up another tree. He's sitting on a branch that bends dangerously under his weight. It sags even more when Phil and Olivia climb onto it as well.

Then—*CRACK!*

The branch snaps.

Shanti plunges straight into the ditch below. Phil and Olivia just manage to grab hold and keep from falling.

"Help!" Shanti yells.

"Swim to the other side, Shan!" Phil shouts down at him.

"No, help!" Shanti cries again.

"What do you mean, no?" Phil calls. "Just swim!"

"No, I... I... I can't...!" Shanti sputters as he thrashes helplessly in the water.

"What did he just say?" Phil blurts out.

"Swim! He can't swim! Shanti can't swim... wait, Shan, grab my hand!" Olivia cries, reaching out desperately.

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Olivia stretches out her hand, but she can't pull Shanti up onto the broken branch. She and Phil quickly climb back to the bank.

The mother of the pups remains sitting there, surprisingly calm.

Phil looks around frantically but sees nothing they could use to pull Shanti out. She's just about to jump into the water to help when—

"The broken branch is in the water!" Phil shouts.
"Try to grab it!"

"Where?!" Shanti yells, panicks.

At that moment, the mother of the puppies suddenly springs into action and leaps into the water.

"Help!" Shanti screams.

Before Phil can even jump in, she sees the animal swimming toward the broken branch. The wolf grabs it in her jaws and pushes it toward Shanti.

He seizes it with both hands and manages to pull himself toward the bank, where his friends haul him out of the ditch.

"Shan, are you okay?" Phil asks, worried.

"Well... *cough cough*..." Shanti sputters. "I've definitely been better... (panting) For a moment I thought I was... hatschoo!"

"You've been saved, Shan—by that... oh wow, did you see that? This is unbelievable!" Olivia cries out, excited.

Shanti sits down for a moment to catch his breath. Meanwhile, the mother settles down calmly beside her two little ones.

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"It wasn't that deep, luckily," Shanti pants.
"But you sink right down into the muck."

"Yeah, right... I've still got a sandwich in my pocket," Phil says.

The mother of the pups immediately walks over to Phil.

"Careful—she might bite your hand," Olivia says nervously.

“She could’ve bitten Shanti just now too, but she didn’t,” Phil replies. “I think she’s hungry.”

Phil holds out the sandwich, and in a single gulp the wolf devours it.

“Wow, one bite and it’s gone,” Shanti says.

“Feeding puppies takes a lot of energy from a mother,” Olivia adds.

“Look, you guys—she’s hurt,” Phil suddenly says.

The animal sits calmly, but blood trickles from her left paw.

“Maybe she stepped on something sharp,” Shanti suggests.

“She definitely needs care, but how?” Olivia wonders.

“I’ve got to change into dry clothes anyway,” Shanti says. “I can bring back some bandages.”

“I’ll go,” Phil interrupts. “I can run really fast. And I’ll grab you a dry shirt and pants too.”

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“Don’t forget the iodine!” Olivia calls after her.

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While Phil runs along the garden path by the ditch toward home, the others stay with the puppies and their injured mother.

The little pups seem to enjoy the water dripping off Shanti, and he can even laugh about it now.

The mother watches everything calmly, not moving a muscle.

“Thanks for saving you,” Shanti says softly as he strokes the animal.

“What are people saying about you that’s so scary? You’re not hurting anyone.”

The puppies want attention too and bounce up against Shanti to be petted.

“Where did you come from?” Shanti asks quietly.

“Oew oew oew,” the pups squeak, wagging their tiny tails.

“They don’t understand you, Shan,” Olivia says. “Of course they’re lost. Maybe they’re from the Netherlands.”

“They haven’t seen wolves lately,” Shanti adds. “Could they’ve taken the boat?” he laughs.

“Well, anything can happen Shanti. But Dutch wolf pups obviously don’t understand English,” he laughs.

On the national TV, there’s also a broadcast about the wolf in London. The whole city is in a frenzy. More and more people start protesting against the supposed danger.

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The park is getting busier by the minute.
People are now searching for the wolf.

The TV reporter addresses viewers in a foreboding tone:

“The park is being combed thoroughly, dear viewers, but no one knows exactly what is happening. Several children are already reported missing, and it is strongly advised not to enter the woods. No one understands how the wolf got to England so quickly. Maybe by boat? No one knows... The Prime Minister Shan been informed, and the park is now been cordoned off. We will update you as soon as more information becomes available. This was Cliff Hanger for London TV. We'll be back soon. For now, back to the studio.”

When Phil arrives home at the garden house, her parents are visiting the neighbors, leaving the coast clear. She quickly grabs some dry clothes for Shanti, takes a little of the rice & beans her mother prepared, and dashes back toward the others in the park.

But Phil's parents are worried after seeing the news on TV.

“I really don't like this,” Des'rée sighs as they walk toward their house.
“She's not answering her phone... The police have been on the line constantly...”

“That's not surprising,” Liam says.
“Half of London must be calling now to check on their children.”

“Let's go check the park,” Des'rée suggests.
“I can't stand the nerves any longer!”

In the park, a large police presence is already visible.

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Dozens of people are frantically searching the park for a wolf and the missing children, but no one Shan seen or heard anything yet.

Some of them make noises as if trying to drive the wolf out.

“Woohoo!” echoes through the trees, and twilight begins to settle over the park.

“Shan, we have to get out of here, or Bacon & Eggs will be found, and the people might even shoot them,” Olivia says, her voice trembling as she hears the hunters approaching.

“Could that really happen?” Shanti whispers, glancing at the tiny puppies.

Then Phil suddenly appears again. She Shan managed to slip past the people, who are completely focused on searching for the wolf.

She’s carrying dry clothes for her friend Shanti, food for the animals, and bandages for the mother’s injured paw.

“Here, Shan, put this on quickly—you must be freezing,” she says.

“W-w-well, it’s not that bad,” Shanti stammers, teeth chattering.

“These pants are way too big!”

“They’re my dad’s,” Phil laughs.

“All my pants are in the laundry anyway, and these would’ve been too tight for you. Just put them on,” she says.

“Here, Olivia, bandages and iodine,” Phil adds.

Olivia takes the supplies and carefully approaches the injured animal.

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The mother wolf stays sitting, watching carefully. It’s tense—no one knows how she will react.

“I won’t hurt you, Mommydear,” Olivia says softly.

While Olivia calmly lifts the paw and sprinkles iodine over it, the injured animal closes her eyes for a moment.

“How are you so good at this?” Shanti asks as he struggles into Liam’s oversized clothes, Phil’s dad’s pants and shirt.

“YouTube,” Olivia replies. “And my mom is a nurse, of course, so that helps.”

“Oh, so it’s easy, then?” Phil says, impressed.

“Ouch!” Olivia suddenly cries out.

“What’s wrong? Did she bite you?” Phil asks, alarmed.

“No, I pricked myself on the pocketknife,” Olivia says.

“Oh no, let me do that too,” Shanti says, wincing.

Then something happens they didn’t expect.

The mother wolf stands and walks toward Olivia. Her large, impressive head moves closer and closer, fixing Olivia with her gaze.

Then she gently licks the cut on Olivia's finger.

The three of them stand there, utterly stunned.

"Make a video!" Olivia whispers.

"Oh no, I'm out of storage!" Phil cries, shocked, as she checks her phone screen.

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"I only have 1% left," Shanti mutters.

"Shan, film it now!" Phil shouts.

Shanti grabs his phone and starts recording as the animal gently licks Olivia's cut.

Suddenly, there's a rustling sound.

Someone appears on the other side of the bushes.

The children duck into the dark undergrowth to stay out of sight.

Phil isn't fast enough to hide and ends up walking straight toward the man, trying to prevent him from noticing her friends and the animals.

The man jumps back in surprise when he sees her.

"Whaaa!" he yells.

"Well, technically I should be the one scared of *you*," Phil says coolly.

"Sorry... are you lost? Don't you know what's going on here?" the man asks.

"Oh, I know! Here's the deal, sir," Phil continues, "I'm looking for my ball, but I can't find it anywhere."

Then there's a faint squeak from the bushes—it's the puppies.

Reflexively, Phil pretends to sneeze.

"ACHOO!" she says. "...Allergies, I guess," she adds casually.

"There's a wolf somewhere in the park kid," the man whispers.

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"No! Really?" Phil says. "Are you serious?"

“Well, no one’s actually seen it yet,” the man replies.

“But you should get out of here before it sees you. That seems safer.”

“Definitely for that animal,” Phil says, walking along with the man to avoid giving away the others.

A little further on, the London TV crew is waiting again for news about the wolf in the park.

“I see a child!” the reporter suddenly shouts, running toward Phil.

“May I ask what you’re doing in the park so late?” the reporter calls.

“Yes, but may I ask what *you’re* doing in the park so late?” Phil replies, walking away and leaving the reporter stunned.

Phil cleverly takes a detour to stay out of sight and heads back toward her friends in the bushes. She Shan to find another path and move as unobtrusively as possible, so she doesn’t reveal their hiding spot.

“Okay, what’s the plan?”

Shan hasn’t had time to answer when they hear shouting.

A crowd of angry people is getting dangerously close.

The puppies start squeaking nervously, sensing the tension.

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Olivia and Shan comfort the puppies.

“Death to the wolf! Safety for our children!” the crowd shouts, standing alarmingly close to their hiding spot.

“These people are completely losing it,” Olivia whispers.

“This isn’t going well.”

“Where’s Phil?” Shan asks, starting to panic a little too.

“Wouldn’t our parents be worried?” Shanti adds.

“I think so, Shan,” Olivia replies, finishing up the bandage on the mother’s paw.

“You know what?” Shanti says suddenly. “I’ve got an idea. We can text our parents that we’re sleeping over at each other’s house! That way they’ll all be relieved at once.”

“Good plan,” Olivia says. “You do that, Shan, I’m almost done with the bandaging.”

Shanti sends a quick message with his 1% battery left, and suddenly both sets of parents are reassured.

It's an old trick.

You text them that you're sleeping over at a friend's place, and that's supposed to be it. Easy, right? You think.

But of course, Shanti and Olivia's parents had already called each other.

When they read in the text that the kids are supposedly "sleeping over," they realize something's up and immediately decide to inform the police.

Olivia gets a message from her mother right away: "*Where are you?*"

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"Are you safe?"

"Please say something!"

"We're worried..."

Olivia decides not to reply yet, since she only has 2% battery left on her phone.

Then, fortunately, Phil reappears.

"Phil!" Olivia and Shanti call out together. "And...?"

"It doesn't look good. Here, I brought some rice & beans too."

"Yum," Shanti says.

"No, not for you, Shan—for the animals," Phil corrects him.

"It's vegetarian and very lightly spiced, so it should be fine. Guys, we need to make a plan."

"I have an idea," Olivia says. "Shouldn't we call the Zoo?"

Meanwhile, the puppies, "Bacon & Eggs," are happily munching on the rice & beans from Des'rée.

"Blijdorp Zoo? They close at six," Phil replies.

"And there aren't any wolves in the Zoo anymore anyway."

"The Party for the Animals?" Shanti suggests.

"The Party for the Animals... well, no," Phil says.

"We need to come up with something clever... but what?"

"Yeah, what?" Olivia asks, starting to panic slightly at all the shouting from the angry crowd getting dangerously close.

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She pets the mother, who sits calmly with her puppies.

“I need to pee,” Shanti says.

“Pfft, that’s helpful. You *can’t* do that now, Shan,” Olivia replies.

“Otherwise I’ll pee my pants and be wet again.”

“Okay. But please be careful, Shan,” Phil says.

“Yeah duh, of course.” Shanti steps out of the bushes to look for a tree.

“I really need to go too,” Olivia says, a little anxious.

“Well, then come with Shan,” Phil sighs.

“I’m a bit scared,” Olivia admits. “What if they find us?”

“Just go! If you have to pee, you have to pee.”

“That’s true,” Olivia says, and she follows Shanti.

“Try to make as little noise as possible,” Phil whispers.

“Because before you know it...”

“CRACK!”

Too late...

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Olivia steps on a branch, which cracks loudly.

“Oops! Sorry!” she calls out.

“Ssssh,” Shanti whispers.

The mother of the puppies walks over to Phil and starts nuzzling her.

Phil is surprised and hugs the animal.

“Hey, silly, we *can* be friends, right...? But what do all these hysterical people even want here? We need to figure out a way to get you and your puppies out of here safely—but how?”

“Hey!” Phil suddenly shouts. She looks around. “Where are they?”

Bacon & Eggs are nowhere to be seen.

Phil panics and immediately starts searching, because Bacon & Eggs are in danger. The angry crowd is swarming through the increasingly dark park, all hunting for their mother.

Meanwhile, Shanti and Olivia have crawled out of the bushes to find a safe spot to relieve themselves.

“Ssssh... don’t step on another branch, Olivia!” Shanti whispers.

“No, of course not...” Olivia says softly.

“I’ll just find a tree,” Shanti replies. “Plenty of options.”

“I can’t choose,” Olivia whispers, looking around carefully to make sure no one sees them.

Then Shanti spots one of the puppies moving. “Olivia, look!”

“Ssssh!” she hisses. “Oh!” She sees the pup now too. Is it Bacon? Or is it Eggs?

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She wants to scream, but she can’t with all those people nearby.

Shanti sees the bright beam of the searchlights getting closer and, nervous, can’t pee. He decides to hold it in and goes after the pup instead.

But just as he’s about to reach it, he trips and falls to the ground.

The other pup comes cheerfully running toward him, thinking it’s a game, and starts squeaking.

“Ssssh,” Shanti whispers in vain.

Olivia rushes over immediately.

“What are you doing?” Olivia asks Shan, who is lying in the leaves.

“Well, I thought, you know what... I’ll just lie down for a bit,” Shanti whispers.

Before he’s even finished speaking, both of them are caught in the beam of a searchlight.

“What are you doing here?” a voice calls.

“Uh, nothing, ma’am,” Shanti says. “Just... uh...”

Two police officers are standing in front of Shanti and Olivia.

“Okay, just...? Are you walking these puppies?” the female officer asks.

“Yes, uh... no, ma’am,” Olivia replies honestly, as the officer picks up one of the pups.

“Whose are they?” a colleague asks while petting the other pup.

“Well... uh, these puppies? They’re ours,” Shanti lies.

“We found them,” Olivia adds. “Aren’t they cute?”

“This is, uh... Eggs,” Shanti mumbles. “Or is it Bacon?”

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“We found you because of your phone signal. Your parents were worried and called us,” the officer says.

At that moment, the mother of the puppies suddenly emerges from the bushes with an angry glare. She growls menacingly.

“Stop! Police!” the officers shout, a little panicked.

But of course, an animal doesn’t understand that.

Meanwhile, one of the officers slowly draws his weapon from its holster in case the mother attacks.

“Maybe you should just put her pup down for a moment, officer,” Shanti says calmly.

The officer does exactly what Shanti suggests.

“Here you go, little one,” he says to the pup, giving it a gentle nudge.

Bacon & Eggs immediately run straight to their mother.

The officers report the situation over their radios, and suddenly sirens sound everywhere.

More officers arrive at the scene quickly.

It looks like something straight out of a movie.

“You’d better come with us, that seems safest,” the officer says.

Then Phil comes running.

“No way! They’ll kill her!” she shouts.

In the distance, the noise of the crowd still searching for

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the wolf is now absolutely deafening.

“Yeah! Here!” some men in the large crowd shout as they spot the puppies standing in front of their mother.

The children step in front of the animals.

One of the pups tries to walk toward the people to play, but Phil quickly picks it up and sets it back with its mother.

“Catch the wolf before it gets us!” someone in the crowd yells.

“Yes!” others scream.

“Seriously, she’s not doing anything!” Phil shouts.

“Really, she was just licking my face a moment ago!”

“Out of the way!” a woman shouts.

What will the officers do now?

The wolf is a protected species, but when people are in danger, what decision should be made?

Suddenly, a woman appears from the crowd, which Shan by now gathered around the children and the animals.

“Shanti Yildiz... What is all this?

Why didn’t you come home for dinner?”

“Mom, I... uh...” Shanti stammers.

"We've been waiting and so worried sick!" she says.

“You are this boy’s mother?” the female officer asks.

“Yes, ma’am, though I do sometimes doubt it,” she says.

“What strange clothes you’re wearing, sweetie,” she adds.

“Mom, please! No ‘sweetie,’” Shanti says.

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The crowd Shan had enough and demands action from the police.

“Protect those children before someone gets hurt!” a woman yells at the officers.

The animals stay calm behind the children and don’t do anything at all.

“Shoot it!” a woman shouts.

“But the kids are standing in front of it,” a man says.

“Out of the way, kids, now! It’s for your own safety!” the officers shout nervously.

“No, don’t do that, it’s not necessary,” Indira, Shanti’s mother, says.

“I have a video on my phone, and then you’ll see why there’s no need. Just watch!”

Indira shows her phone with the video of Shanti, capturing the mother of the puppies licking Olivia’s finger.

The officer takes the phone.

“Was the video actually sent, Mom?” Shanti asks.

“Yes! And I thought my battery was dead!”

“Yeah, luckily just in time. I was worried, boy. Mom thought you fell in the water!”

“Unfortunately, we can’t watch the video here, ma’am, because there’s no signal. But we’re still concerned, so please all of you step aside for your own safety,” the officers say firmly.

The officers pick up the children and move them away from the animals.

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No!” Phil shouts. She struggles to break free just like Shan and Olivia.

“Don’t do it! Let me go!” Olivia screams.

The mother of Bacon & Eggs now stands up and glares angrily at the officers.

The officers slowly draw their weapons and aim.

The puppies begin to squeak even louder.

Then a man comes running from the house by the garden.

“Hello! Move aside, move aside! What’s going on here?” the man asks.

Everyone turns to look.

“Would you please leave, sir?” the officer says.

“Well, I live here. This is my garden,” the man replies.

“I just got home and see all these people coming and going... is there a party?”

“There’s a wolf in your garden,” the officer says.

“Pardon?” the man asks. “A what?”

“And she Shan pups, so she’s extra dangerous,” another officer adds.

At that exact moment, the mother of Bacon & Eggs charges toward the man.

“There she goes!” the officer shouts. “Watch out...!”

Other officers also draw their weapons.

“Hey, what are you doing? Take it easy!” the man yells.

The animal quickens her pace and leaps at the man.

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“Hey, come here! Yes, good girl! What a sweet animal,” the man calls, hugging the dog.

“Huh, is this your wolf?” an officer asks, slowly lowering her weapon.

“No, this is my dog. Come to the boss, Pepper!” the man replies.

He notices the puppies and walks over to them.

“Pepper, you had puppies... two puppies!”

“And their names are Bacon & Eggs,” Phil says.

“Look, sir, our ball went into the ditch, and then when we discovered the puppies, we couldn’t get away because of all the people and the police—they wanted to kill them,” Phil explains.

“Well, uh... we didn’t really mean that,” an officer says nervously, laughing awkwardly.

“No, really not...” Phil says sarcastically. “We just wanted to protect the people. Beautiful dog, Pepper, by the way, sir,” the officer adds.

“But it’s really not a wolf?”

“She’s a Northern Inuit,” the man explains. “These dogs sometimes look a little like a wolf.”

“A little?” the officer laughs.

“Too bad!” Shanti exclaims.

“Too bad?” the other officer asks.

“Yes, otherwise we could’ve been in the newspaper with a real wolf. But she’s sweet too,” Shanti says.

“Well, then you’ve saved the puppies,” the man says.

“You’ve definitely earned a reward. Here!”

He pulls 100 pound from his pocket and hands the bill to Phil.

“Wow, thank you so much, sir! But... uh... don’t they get anything?” she jokes, pointing at Shanti and Olivia.

“You’re a sweet one, but you need to share this among the three of you,” Pepper’s owner says.

“If you want, you can also take Pepper for a walk sometime. My name’s Patrick, and I live at 103,” the man adds.

“Yes, please!” Phil exclaims. “One pound per walk?”

“You’re a clever spark, but alright! She seems to like you too,” Patrick says.

“And how do we know for sure this isn’t a wolf?” Mrs. Edna von Blabber suddenly calls from the crowd.

“It would be the first wolf ever to be microchipped,” Pepper’s owner explains.

Everyone around, now reassured, bursts out laughing.

“Pepper a wolf... that’s just too much, Mrs Blabber,” Patrick says.

“*von* Blabber! *von* Blabber-Beauchamp for you!” she replies.

“I’d keep the animal inside anyway—it only causes panic.”

“Well, ma’am, I think *you’re* the one causing panic,” Shanti says.

“Yes, they should microchip *you*, Mrs. Cuckle von Loudmouth,” Phil adds.

Everyone laughs again, and the woman storms off angrily.

“Cheeky child! This isn’t over yet!” she huffs.

The children are immediately interviewed by TV and radio reporters.

When Phil gets home, she enthusiastically greets her parrot.

“Hey ZipIt!” Phil calls out.

“Hi Patty,” the parrot replies, much to her surprise.

“I’m not called Patty!” she says.

“I’m not called ZipIt,” the parrot retorts.

Phil laughs. “Silly parrot...”

“ZipIt!” the bird calls back.

They all laugh. The parrot joins in, though it sounds a bit like a parrot with a toothache.

The next day, calm Shan returned to Regent Park.

People are walking their dogs, children are playing, others are cycling or jogging. Boats sail on the pond, and many young people are surfing.

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Here and there, people were still talking about how the great panic over the wolf had started.

Phil, Olivia, and Shan were on their way to check on Pepper, Bacon & Eggs to see how they were doing.

“And it could have happened,” Olivia says.

“What?” asks Shan.

“That Pepper might actually have been a wolf.”

“In India, tigers even walk around in neighborhoods, so why couldn’t a wolf come to London?”

Olivia explains.

“Uh, yeah, something like that could naturally happen,” Phil adds.

“But I’m glad it was Pepper and Bacon & Eggs.”

“Maybe we can cuddle the puppies later,” Shanti suggests.

“Or maybe we can pick one,” says Phil.

“As a reward!”

“Then we’d have to raise it together,” Olivia points out.

“Well, my parents definitely wouldn’t allow it... a puppy,” Shanti says.

“My dad’s allergic... HA HA HATSCHOO!!”

“Oh, did you inherit that from him?” Phil laughs.

“Hatschoo Singh!”

“Shouldn’t you borrow those fun reading-comprehension books my mom mentioned yesterday?”
Phil adds.

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“Well, I’ll wait a little longer if you don’t mind—I’d rather read the newspaper,” Shanti said.

“The newspaper?” Phil and Olivia exclaimed in unison, surprised.

“I’d rather read the article they’re going to write about me. That could actually be fun.”

He already pictured the article in his mind...

“Shanti Singh : Hero of the park.”

“The football player who can communicate with wolves.”

“Ha! Do you think they’ll really write that?” Olivia laughed.

“They didn’t even ask for your name!”

Suddenly, a very friendly dog came walking toward the children, with two little ones trotting beside her—it was Pepper!

When Pepper reached the children, she jumped on Shanti, causing him to fall over. He laughed as he wrestled with Pepper, who enthusiastically licked his face.

The puppies were cuddled by Phil and Olivia.

“Look at this!” their owner, Patrick, called out.

“There are the three heroes from last night!”

“Were you checking to see if there really was a wolf in the park?” he asked, laughing.

“No, we were actually on our way to see you,” Phil replied, holding one of the puppies against her neck.

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“Yes, we were thinking maybe we could... uh...”

“Sssht, Shan!” Olivia whispered.

“We were just curious how Bacon & Eggs are doing,” she said modestly.

“Or maybe you’d like to have one?” Patrick asked.

“Uh, well...” Phil mumbled.

“They’re really very sweet.”

“If you want, I can ask my wife. We actually have five more. We only discovered them later because they were sleeping in the shed! So just ask your parents, and I’ll hear back. I have to go now; I need to take the kids to football. You know where we live.”

“At number 103!” Shan shouted.

“Good memory, boy,” Patrick said. “Come on, Pepper!”

Patrick walked away with Pepper and the puppies, and the children looked at each other in disbelief.

“My parents would never allow it,” Olivia said.

“Mine definitely not,” Shanti added. “What about your parents, Phil?”

“I’ll just try to work on them a little,” she said.

“How?” asked Olivia.

“Well, if I seriously ‘get to work’ with my dyslexion,” Phil laughed.

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“Dys-lec-sia!” Olivia said.

“That’s what I mean!” Phil laughed.

“And if I suddenly *can* read properly... then that deserves a reward, right?”

“Oh, can I borrow those reading comprehension books from you, Phil?” Shanti asked.

“Of course, buddy!” Phil replied.

And they continued walking.

In the Park, a man in an tracksuit was training his dog.

Well... *training*...

On a small field, he was trying to teach the dog to fetch. Or at least, he was trying...

“Grab the stick!” he shouted.

The dog didn’t react at all. The children saw this and laughed.

“Wolf! Wo-luf! Grab the stick... now!!” the man shouted even louder.

The dog ran off and came back—not with a stick, but with a half-chewed doll.

It looked a little gruesome.

“No, you stupid dog! What did we learn in training? Grab the stick! Not the doll!” the man yelled.

“Wolf?” the children repeated, looking at each other.

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Amazed, they looked at each other.

“Wraf,” Wolf said—he wanted to fetch again.

“What a waste of money, that dog training, sir,” Phil said.

“Are you going to be cheeky, little brat?” the man shouted angrily.

“I’ll have you fetch in a second!” he yelled.

After that, the three of them decided it was best to run away.

“He doesn’t listen anyway!” Phil called after the man.

Late in the evening, when Mrs. von Blabber was taking a walk, the park was very quiet. She had let her little dog off the leash for a moment but now wanted to go home.

“Duchess? Dúúúchess! Here! Listen to your owner, Du-chess!

Where are you now?”

Suddenly, a kind of wolf howl echoed through the park.

von Blabber looked around in fright.

“Duchess...?”

You might also enjoy *Fred in the Harbor* and *Fred and the Secret of the Harbor* by Joris.

Check them out at www.fred010.nl

