

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

**TOBY'S
TALE**

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Toby's Tale
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*This book is dedicated to Toby and to all
rescue dogs in need of a place to call home.*



*Toby
1988 - 1999*

*A portion of the proceeds from the sale of each book will
be donated to either the Humane Society of the United
States or an organization of the author's choice that
has demonstrated successful efforts in promoting and
advocating for the protection and welfare of dogs.*

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Please consider adopting from your local shelter if you have room in your heart and home for a rescue dog. Visit my website at <http://www.gawhitmore.com/> for a list of shelters in your area.

PROLOGUE

Toby huddled beneath the small table in the corner of the room. His eyes darted back and forth in fear. The corner, at one time a place of refuge, a place to escape from the man and his wrath, had now become a trap. Except for the uncontrollable trembling coursing through his body, he remained perfectly still. Pain emanated from the point where the man's boot had made contact with his leg, his right leg this time.

As the yelling around him continued, his resolve to run away strengthened. Although he had found love and friendship at this place he had begun to think of as home, he had found pain and suffering as well. He closed his eyes, shut out the noise, and transported himself back to the safe shelter of the farm. Back to his mother and his sister Tara. Back to a time of no pain . . .

PART I
THE FAMILY TREE



“When a shepherd goes to kill a wolf,
and takes his dog along to see the sport,
he should take care to avoid mistakes.
The dog has certain relationships to the wolf
the shepherd may have forgotten.”

– *Robert Persig*

CHAPTER 1

TOBY AND SHEP DASHED into the cool, dark barn. Bits of straw fell from their fur as they sprinted across the dirt floor, racing to where their mother lay feeding the others. In their wake, clouds of dust particles danced and swirled in the beams of sunlight streaming through the open hayloft doors above. Playing with his brother had made Toby hungry, but Shep reached their mother first and beat him to the last feeding spot. He pushed his way through the squirming bodies of his siblings, hoping to dislodge one of them . . .

“Hey!” someone yelled. “You’re stepping on me!”

“Sorry, Tuck, but I’m starving.” Out of all of them, why did he have to pick Tuck to step on?

“You’re not the only one who’s hungry,” his brother snapped. “First come, first served. Now get off me and wait your turn.” Toby lost his footing as Tuck settled back down to feed and, as luck would have it, found himself at an empty feeding spot between two of his other siblings.

The morning was an unusually hot one, even for July. The strong summer sun beat down on Missy and her puppies. The heat didn't seem to bother the puppies the way it bothered Missy, who, at the moment of Toby's triumph, decided to move out of the path of the hot rays. The puppies had been feeding long enough. She pulled herself up from the mass of fur balls at her stomach, forcing Toby to let go of her. Feeding time was over.

The litter was Missy's second. The puppies from her first litter had been sold shortly after they were born. She still missed them terribly, and always would, but the new puppies kept her busy, especially Toby and Tara. She had a special place in her heart for them. The only two white puppies amongst a brood of all black, they stood out from the rest of the pack like missing front teeth. And even though Toby was the largest of the litter, he didn't act the part. His temperament was mild, and he never used his size to bully his siblings. Missy suspected he wasn't even aware of his intimidating appearance. Tara—smaller than Toby, but still larger than their other siblings—stuck to Toby like his shadow wherever he went. The two were inseparable.



THE LARGE BAILEY farm where Missy and her family lived was like most farms. A large white house sat proudly at the front of the property, which abutted the dirt road leading to the main street into town. Behind the house was a faded, red barn surrounded by numerous outbuildings. Cows and sheep grazed in the fields, and the sound of chickens clucking and garbling emanated from the coops

behind the barn. In the distance, two horses fed in the meadow that stretched out to the woods that encircled the property.

Generations of Baileys had made their living farming and raising livestock, first in the small town of Cookes Crossing, Idaho, and then in northern California, where the current Bailey family had moved just two years earlier. The Baileys—or rather, Mr. Bailey, to be precise—had decided to move the family with the hope of improving their financial situation. Mrs. Bailey was still waiting for them to reap the benefits of that decision.

Mr. Bailey had started breeding German Shepherds several years earlier, and though it was a side business for him, he took it very seriously. His reputation for selling high quality dogs grew with each litter, and he even received inquiries from out-of-state buyers who were willing to travel long distances to purchase a “Bailey Breeders” dog. But when the last litter produced two more white puppies, Mr. Bailey was livid. He still believed—as many breeders still did—that white German Shepherds were an anomaly, a genetic defect of the breed.

That morning, as Toby struggled to find a spot to eat, the Bailey family sat together eating breakfast, quietly enjoying the standard fare of bacon and eggs Mrs. Bailey had prepared.

Mr. Bailey popped the last piece of toast into his mouth, pushed his chair back from the table and stretched his legs.

“There goes our profit from this litter,” he said, breaking the silence that had settled at the table. “All of the puppies would’ve been sold by now if it weren’t for those two white ones. We’ve always been able to find buyers for all of the

puppies well before they were ready to go, at least up until that last white puppy born two years ago. In fact, we usually have to turn people away.” He shook his head in disgust. “We’ll never find anyone to buy those two.” The scowl on his leathery face matched the deep wrinkles etched there. His pale green eyes, barely visible between the squinted slits of his lids, peered out beneath bushy auburn eyebrows.

“Someone will buy them,” said Mrs. Bailey, pausing her fork in midair. “They’re adorable.”

“How can you say that? It took us forever to find someone to buy the last one and look what happened there,” he shot back at her, absentmindedly brushing the toast crumbs that had fallen onto the bib of his faded overalls onto the equally faded linoleum floor. “Besides, I’m more worried about my reputation being tarnished than getting rid of those dogs.”

Michael had stopped eating as soon as his father mentioned the two white puppies. Why was his father always so angry about them? They were the cutest puppies he had ever seen. How could they make anyone angry?

“Why won’t anyone want them?” Michael asked. “They’re so cute, and they’re really smart, too.” Innocence shone on his small freckled face. He was smaller than most boys his age. And if that wasn’t enough, he had inherited his father’s red hair, which made him stand out like a beacon wherever he went. Some of the older kids at school liked to tease him and called him “carrot-top” or “freckle-face”. He tried not to let the razzing bother him; sometimes he would even laugh with them to hide the hurt he felt inside.

Mr. Bailey turned to his son. “Trust me. No one wants a white German Shepherd.”

“Then can *we* keep them, Dad? Please?” Michael’s soft hazel eyes pleaded with his father.

“Absolutely not,” said Mr. Bailey. “It’s out of the question. Now finish your breakfast so you can do your chores.”

Michael knew from experience that the discussion was over. He would pretend the puppies were his for the time being, which, if nobody wanted to buy them, might be a long time.

Later that afternoon, as Michael half-heartedly swept the front porch, he tried to think of names for the two white dogs but none of the ideas he came up with satisfied him. On his way to clean out the horse stable, he stopped to sit on the wooden swing that hung from the old tree in the back yard. As he slowly swung back and forth, the toes of his old sneakers scraping the dirt beneath him, his mind drifted to thoughts of his friends and how much he missed them now that school was over. Since his friends’ farms were so far away from his own, recess was one of the few opportunities he had to play with them during the school year, and in the summer, he rarely saw them at all. Playing with the puppies helped alleviate the loneliness he sometimes felt.

One of the games he and his friends liked to play during recess was cowboys and Indians. They would use sticks for guns and arrows and run around the school-yard whooping and hollering. Most of his friends preferred being cowboys, but Michael always chose to be an Indian.

“I know,” he said suddenly, “I’ll give them Indian names. I’ll name the boy puppy Little Chief and the girl puppy White Cloud.” Michael smiled to himself and ran off to tell his friend Walt, the farmhand.