

Reuniting Bay

By: Emily H.

"Can I have a puppy, please?" The question came out of the blue from Bella Anderson's lips one day.

Her father turned his head from where he was watching TV on the couch.

"A puppy?" he repeated, startled.

Bella nodded. She'd been wanting one for months.

Mr. Anderson scratched his head.

"I don't know, sweetie. Taking care of a puppy is an awful lot of work," he said slowly.

"I'll take good care of it! I'll take it out for walks, I'll give it food and water, and I'll give it lots of attention!" Bella pleaded.

Her father chuckled.

"You'll also have to pick up after it. Then there's the vet bills and numerous other costs as well."

"Please! I promise I'll be responsible."

"That's for your mother to decide," Mr. Anderson responded with a wry smile. "She'll have to decide whether it's worth a load of dog fur everywhere."

"I'll convince her," Bella promised. She ran to her mother, who was making lunch.

"Bella! A dog, in our house? I've worked very hard to clean it, you know," came Mrs. Anderson's reply.

"I'll sweep the floor! I'll give it a bath every day!" Bella was almost on her knees now. "I'll do whatever I need to do."

Her mother gave an exasperated sigh.

"Are you sure? The puppy will eventually become a big dog, and it will be harder to take care of it."

"I know! But it'll still be the same sweet puppy on the inside." Bella said solemnly.

Mrs. Anderson quickly glanced at Bella's father, who was reading a book on a chair nearby, but clearly listening to their conversation.

"Did your father say yes?" she asked.

"He said it was up for you to decide," Bella responded.

Her mother gave her a long, measured look.

"Very well. You may have a puppy."

The house exploded in a number of whoops and squeals as Bella jumped up and down for joy. She was getting a puppy! Once the screaming had died down, Mrs. Anderson unplugged her ears.

"Next week, we can go visit the downtown shelter and adopt a puppy. We'll have to do lots of research, and start preparing our house for a new arrival," she announced.

Bella hugged her mother as tightly as she could, then ran to her father and also hugged him.

"Thank you," she whispered.

At first, Bella was very impatient. How would she manage to wait an entire week? But, somehow, she did. In that time, she and her parents bought a dog bed, dog food, dog toys, treats, and many other dog-related essential items. And now, Bella was finally getting the companion that she had been waiting for.

The reason Bella had wanted a puppy was because it was summer break. She couldn't see her friends at school, and as she didn't have a phone yet, being in third grade, she had no way to communicate with them.

She and her mother were driving downtown to the local shelter.

As soon as they got there, Bella jumped out of the car and excitedly ran up the stairs and opened the shelter doors.

A large amount of yapping and barking greeted her. There were big dogs, small dogs, short-haired dogs and long-haired dogs, and so many breeds! There were collies, great danes, chihuahuas, labradors, retrievers, pugs, and so many more.

Mrs. Anderson appeared right behind her.

"Choose carefully," she warned.

Bella promised that she would.

A brown-haired lady walked up to them.

"Hello!" she smiled. "Are you looking to adopt a dog today?"

"Yes," Bella replied eagerly. "I want a nice, soft one who will play with me and be my friend."

"Well, why don't you have a look?" the woman offered. "I'm Stacy, by the way," she added. She motioned towards the pens. Bella was happy to do so. Her mother stayed behind, sitting in a chair and reading a magazine.

Bella walked up and down the aisle. She passed many dogs, who were eagerly barking and pawing at their pens.

"Do you have any puppies?" she asked Stacy. Stacy smiled. "Sure thing! There's quite a few back here."

She opened another set of doors that led back to another room, where high pitched squeaks and yapping filled the air.

Puppies! There were several breeds of them as well. Some were napping, others were playing, and several were just bouncing around and tripping over their own tiny legs. There were food and water bowls everywhere, and lots of small, soft dog beds on the floor. Some volunteers were cleaning up the little messes that the puppies left behind.

Bella figured she would choose one of the puppies. But which one was the right one? She knew that she would know when she saw it.

But it never came to her. As she inspected and patted the puppies' heads, none of them seemed to be the right one. Yes, they were normal, cute and lovable puppies, but Bella felt the need to have a connection with one.

As she passed one the puppy pens, she initially thought it was empty. But she looked closer and saw that there was a tiny, golden, furry back hunched in the corner, isolated from all the others. Bella, with Stacy's permission, stepped into the pen.

The small golden puppy turned and immediately let out a squeak of fright and drew closer to the edges of the pen.

"I won't hurt you," Bella said softly. "I'd like to be your friend."

The puppy still whimpered fearfully.

Bella slowly reached out a hand and tried to gently stroke the puppy, but he ducked away and scurried to another corner of the pen.

"That's Bay." Stacy murmured sympathetically. "He's a golden retriever. He doesn't trust strangers very much. Even though he knows the staff, he doesn't interact much with them either."

"What happened to him?" Bella questioned.

"Ever since he was separated from his sister, he's always been like this, the poor thing. He doesn't interact with the other puppies anymore. He's scared of everything and everyone now." Stacy explained.

"But why was he separated from his sister?" Bella asked, astonished and sad that such a thing had happened to Bay, and what it had caused him.

"Three weeks ago, a guy came in and wanted Bay's sister, Rose. He didn't want Bay, even though the two were siblings. Rose was adopted, and Bay was left behind."

"That's so sad," Bella whispered.

"It is," Stacy agreed.

Bella made several attempts to try to pet Bay, but every time he moved away. But finally, after numerous tries, he finally allowed Bella to touch him lightly on the back.

Bella knew that Bay was the one she wanted. Bay was lonely, just like she was, since she couldn't interact with her friends. Maybe Bella could cheer him up.

"I would like Bay," Bella said finally to Stacy.

Stacy seemed surprised.

"Are you sure? Bay isn't very interactive or playful anymore. There's plenty of other puppies that would be happy to be your friend."

"No," Bella answered as politely as she could. "I'd like Bay, please."

"Okay, then." Stacy reached in and gently hoisted Bay out of the pen, who squirmed and whined feebly in protest. Stacy glanced sideways at Bella.

"You know why we named him Bay? Ever since Rose was adopted, Bay would howl every night. We've tried to calm him down, but it hasn't really worked. So you might have to put up with that when he gets to your house."

"I'll be fine," Bella assured Stacy, although she secretly had her thoughts about what her mother would say to this piece of information. Maybe she wouldn't need to hear about that right now.

Mrs. Anderson and Bella paid for Bay and signed paperwork. Bay was put in a little kennel with a soft blanket. He had stopped whimpering and whining - in fact, he hardly made a sound.

He was quiet the entire trip home. When they got there, Bay's kennel was gently placed on the floor and opened.

"Come on," Bella coaxed. "I'll play with you and be your friend. I'll feed you and love you and take care of you."

Bay still didn't react. He huddled up in the corner of the kennel like he did when he was in the pen at the shelter.

Bella thought hard. What would it take to bring Bay out of the kennel? Ah! She opened a bag of dog treats and held one out to Bay. He sniffed the air, smelling the treat, but he still wouldn't take it from Bella's hand. Bella tossed the treat into the kennel. Bay jumped back, sniffed the treat again, then scarfed it down. Bella threw another one. That one also was quickly gobbled up.

Bella threw a few more treats before finally refusing to throw them anymore. Instead, she laid out her hand, with the treat in clear view of Bay.

Bella could tell that Bay wanted that treat, but still clearly didn't really trust her. This could be the way to improve it.

Slowly, Bay crawled forward until he was within a hand's length of Bella's hand and the treat. Then he lunged forward, grabbed the treat with his sharp baby teeth and scampered back to the safety of the kennel.

Well, it was a start. Bella tried again. This time, although he still dashed back as quickly as he could when he had the treat in his jaws, Bay was less hesitant about taking the treat from Bella's hand.

Soon he was not only taking treats confidently from Bella's hand, but he was also allowing her to pat his head and stroke his fur. Bella was overjoyed at this new change.

Eventually, Bella left Bay to do homework. When she came back, Bay was sitting and looking at her, alert and unmoving. Bella patted Bay's head.

"Good boy, Bay."

She fixed him two bowls - one with dog food and the other with water. Bay lapped up some water and ravenously ate all the dog food, which made Bella laugh.

Later that evening she gave Bay a bath and dinner. She also took out toys for Bay to play with. He especially liked the tug-of-war rope and the chewing plastic bone with a squeaker. But she could tell that he was still sad.

Soon it was time for Bella to go to sleep. She said goodnight to Bay and got into her bed. But right as she was dozing off she was suddenly awoken by a sad howl. She immediately sat up. It was Bay, and he was howling like wolves howling at the moon.

Bella knew why. Stacy had told her the reason. It seemed Bay was still mourning the separation with his sister, Rose. Bella put a pillow over her head to try to block out the sound, but she could still faintly hear it. She heard her mother's voice ring out, scolding Bay, but Bay still howled. A rattle told Bella that Bay was being shut back in the kennel, which muffled his howls.

If Bay was going to stop howling, he would need to be reunited with his sister, Rose. But how? Bella finally went to sleep with those thoughts swirling around in her head.

Bella awoke the next morning. Was it all a dream? She jumped out of bed, then ran into the living room. She breathed a sigh of relief. Bay's kennel was there. But hold on. Bella got on her knees and looked inside the kennel, which was open. It was empty!

Bella started to panic. Had Bay somehow escaped? Had her parents taken him back to the shelter because of his howls last night?

As if in response to her questions, the door burst open, and Bay was padding alongside Bella's father. Was that a collar around Bay's neck that was attaching him to that leash? As soon as Bay was let off the leash, he stumbled towards his kennel, curled up inside it and fell asleep.

"Hi, sweetheart!" Mr. Anderson greeted Bella with a big hug. "While you were sleeping, I went and got Bay a collar and a visit to the vet." he explained. "He's just had his vaccines and medicines, so he's a bit discomforted right now. Best to let him sleep."

Bella nodded. She was glad that Bay had gotten his collar and veterinary care. But she was determined to find Bay's sister, Rose.

"I want to find Bay's sister." Once more the words simply were blurted out randomly. Her father looked at her.

"What do you mean?"

"You know how Bay howled at night?" Mr. Anderson nodded.

"It's because he misses his sister, Rose. We have to reunite them," Bella continued. Mr. Anderson seemed unsure.

"But we don't know that Rose isn't being taken care of, or if the owner wants to give her up," he said gently.

"I know, but Bay depends on it! That's why he acts scared and sad. He needs her."

Her father gave a resigned sigh. "We'll see what we can do," he promised.

After plenty of researching, Bella and her parents finally tracked down the location of Rose's home. They arrived at the house the next day, Bay on the leash with them.

Bella rang the doorbell. A few moments later, a rough looking, young man appeared at the door.

"Whaddya want?" he grunted.

Bella swallowed her nervousness.

"Do you happen to have a puppy named Rose?" she asked boldly.

The man seemed surprised. "Yes, I do, but I don't want it." Bella felt hope rise in her chest.

"Why?" she pressed.

"My girlfriend wanted a puppy, so I got Rose. Apparently Rose had a brother, but I wasn't gonna have two dogs in my house. So I only took her. But then my girlfriend left a week ago, so I'm stuck with the dog. I was gonna return her to the shelter, anyways."

Bella looked excitedly at the young man.

"Can I see her?"

"Sure, kid." The man disappeared and came back a few moments later with a golden retriever puppy that looked almost identical to Bay.

As soon as Bay warily sniffed the dog, he went into a frenzy. He yipped and ran madly around in circles. The other puppy was let down onto the pavement, and Bay ran up to her, wagging his tail furiously. Rose sniffed Bay, then with a great yip, she also began wagging her tail and playing with Bay.

“You keep her. I don’t want her.” the man said. Bella looked at her parents, who both nodded. She was very happy to see the two littermates together again at last. Bay wouldn’t be scared and lonely anymore. And everyone would get a good night’s sleep. Bay was reunited at last.

The End