

## “Table Scraps”

The sun slowly settles itself into the thick trees, soaking the soft, dry land in tranquility. It gives off the feeling of drinking cold water after a nice, long run in the fields. Wandering the tall grass, I wonder if I'll get a proper meal tonight. I normally get meager meals because being the dog of a poverty-struck family doesn't exactly leave you with a full belly. Not that I'm not grateful. It's better than being on the streets.

I race home, my mutt legs eating up the distance. I run even faster when I see Maggie whistling and snapping her fingers. I'm only alive because of her. She noticed me all skin and bones and immediately brought me home. I owe her my life. I'm forever grateful the Lofters took me in. I'm one more mouth to feed, so why would they take me? I think other dogs wouldn't even question that sort of thing, but I guess being on the streets changes you.

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Maggie's dad is always out hunting for jobs, hoping to get us back on our feet. Maggie's mom, Celia, is at home taking care of everything all the time. I figure the best thing *I* can do to help the Lofters is to go out hunting and maybe find a meal to fill up their bellies.

Last night, Ann Marie, the youngest Lofter daughter, asked why the Lofters are different from everyone else. Ann Marie kind of looks like a doe, with long legs, huge eyes, and tight, brown curls that hug her head relentlessly.

When Mr. Lofter didn't answer, she said, "It's because we're poor, isn't it?" She looked up at Mr. Lofter, her big brown eyes looking into his mind.

The Lofter parents looked at her in awe, wondering how she could know such a thing at three years old. But I didn't wonder. Ann Marie had always had a hidden wisdom about her. Maybe dogs just have a sort of sense.

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As days stroll on by, I notice how our situation is worsening. We're sinking deeper and deeper into the hole. I get less and less to eat each meal. While the rest of the family gets more discouraged, Mr. Lofter gets more determined. He feels it is his duty to find a good job to save our family.

One night, Maggie comes over to my bed, crying hard. She despairs about how she's scared of what's going to happen and wishes there was something she could do. I lick her hand and nuzzle her face to make her feel better, but it doesn't seem to help too much. I follow her to her bed and snuggle up next to her, letting her use my stomach as a pillow. Her warm tears soak me, not only in water, but also in sadness and hurt. The minutes go by like hours, and it seems like I haven't slept a wink when morning comes.

I spend the day hunting, and by the end of the day I still have no luck. My spirits are down until Mr. Lofter comes home. After months of job hunting, he finally has good news. He tells us that he's found a job as a convenience store clerk and that the pay isn't too bad. A light breeze blows into the house, and I know it's the impact of the beginning of our climb out of the hole, out of poverty.

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