

One Hundred and One Dalmatians

When the Dalmatian puppies are stolen, all the dogs in London and the east of England 'talk' to each other by barking messages. This is called the 'twilight barking'. In this way they are able to find the puppies and tell the puppies' parents.



"Take care of yourself," barked the Sheepdog. "Remember those Baddun brothers are villains."

The cat clawed her way down, backwards, to the ground, then hurried through the overgrown shrubbery. Soon she came to an old brick wall which enclosed a stable-yard. From behind the wall came whimperings and snufflings. She leapt on top of the wall and looked down.

The next second, one of the Baddun brothers saw her and threw a stone at her. She dodged it, jumped from the wall, and ran for her life. In two minutes she was safely back with the Sheepdog.

"They're there!" she said, triumphantly. "The place is *seething* with Dalmatian puppies!"

The Sheepdog was a formidable Twilight Barker. Tonight, with the most important news in Dogdom to send out, he surpassed himself. And so the message travelled, by way of

farm dogs and house dogs, great dogs and small dogs. Sometimes a bark would carry half a mile or more, sometimes it would only need to carry a few yards. One sharp-eared Cairn saved the chain from breaking by picking up a bark from nearly a mile away, and then almost bursting herself getting it on to the dog next door. Across miles and miles of country, across miles and miles of suburbs, across a network of London streets the chain held firm; from the depths of Suffolk to the top of Primrose Hill – where Pongo and Missis, still as statues, stood listening, listening.

"Puppies found in lonely house. S.O.S. on old bone –" Missis could not take it all in. But Pongo missed nothing. There were instructions for reaching the village, suggestions for the journey, offers of hospitality on the way. And the dog chain was standing by to take a message back to the pups – the Sheepdog would

bark it over the wall in the dead of night.

At first Missis was too excited to think of anything to say, but Pongo barked clearly: "Tell them we're coming! Tell them we start tonight! Tell them to be brave!"

Then Missis found her voice: "Give them all our love! Tell Patch to take care of the Cadpig! Tell Lucky not to be too daring! Tell Roly Poly to keep out of mischief!" She would have sent a message to every one of the fifteen pups if Pongo had not whispered: "That's enough, dear. We mustn't make it too complicated. Let the Great Dane start work now."

So they signed off and there was a sudden silence. And then, though not quite so loudly, they heard the Great Dane again. But this time he was not barking towards them. What they heard was their message, starting on its way to Suffolk.

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