





*It was Christmas time. Snow fell in gentle flurries, covering the lamplit streets.*

Inside one particular house, beside a tree shining with decorations, a husband passed his wife a beautifully wrapped box.

“It’s for you, Darling,” he said. “Merry Christmas.”

“Oh, Jim, dear,” said his wife, beginning to unwrap the box. “It’s the one I was admiring, isn’t it? Trimmed with ribbons?”

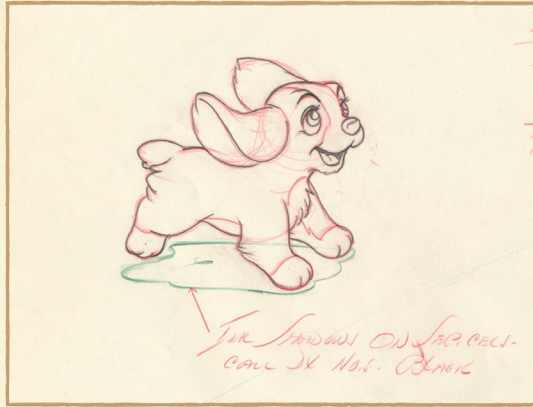
“Well, it has a ribbon,” laughed Jim.

From inside the box came little squeaking noises. The lid moved, and there, beneath it, was a little puppy, wearing a red bow.

“You like her, Darling?” asked Jim.

“Oh, I love her,” Darling replied, lifting up the puppy and hugging her. “What a perfectly beautiful little lady.”

And ‘Lady’ became her name.



That night, Jim fetched a basket and Lady came scampering after.

“Come on, Lady. Over here,” said Jim, coaxing her towards the basket.

“But Jim, dear,” said his wife, “are you sure she’ll be warm enough?”

“Now, now, don’t worry, Darling,” said Jim. “She’ll go right to sleep.”

Then they shut the door and went upstairs to bed.

But Lady was lonely. She howled. She pawed at the door. And when at last she managed to push it open, she climbed the steep stairs, slipping and sliding as she went. Then she sat beside her owners’ bed, and howled some more.

Jim covered his ears with a pillow.

Lady howled louder.

“Oh all right,” said Jim, placing Lady at the end of the bed. “But remember, just for tonight.”





A few months later, and Lady still slept in the exact same spot every night. In the morning, she sprang off the bed, then started waking Jim. She licked his hand, pulled his leg from the bed, and nudged his slippers towards his feet...

"All right, Lady," Jim yawned. "All right. I'm up. I'm up, Lady. I..."

Then he sank back into the bed. "Oh no!"

"What's wrong, Jim? What is it?" asked Darling.

"Can't you explain to Lady about Sundays?" he asked.

Lady, however, was already racing down the stairs. She fetched the paper, shredding the front page as she pulled it in through the dog door.

But in her owners' eyes, Lady could do no wrong.

"Have you noticed, Darling," said Jim over breakfast, "since we've had Lady, we see less and less of those disturbing headlines?"

"Yes, I just don't know how we ever got along without her," Darling replied, giving Lady a biscuit.

Lady's life was very good.





A few days later, Darling placed a beautiful blue collar with a shiny gold license around Lady's neck. Lady proudly showed it off to her friend, Jock, the terrier from next door.

"Notice anything different?" Lady asked.

"You've had a bath?" asked Jock.

"No, not that," said Lady.

"You've had your nails clipped?" asked Jock.

"Guess again," said Lady, shimmying her collar.

"Why, lassie. A bonnie new collar. Have you shown it to Trusty yet?"

"No," replied Lady.

"We'd best go at once," said Jock. "You know how sensitive he is about these things."

They walked down the street to Trusty's house. There lay the old bloodhound, fast asleep on the porch.

