

The Day Hannah Came

by *Bullet the Wonderdog & Victoria Stewart*

It was a Saturday night, and we didn't go to Allie's.

I know what Saturday nights mean. Lisa puts on her leather sandals—the ones that smell like porch wood and salt air—and grabs my leash from the hook. That's my signal to wag hard and start pacing by the door. Because Saturday night means Allie.



Allie is my best friend. She's a white terrier mix with a short coat that sheds everywhere and a bark so shrill it could wake dolphins. She has a bit of a limp from an old injury, so she doesn't run much. But we still play. I trot beside her gently, and when she gets tired, we settle into what Lisa calls *companionable togetherness*. Allie takes one chair, I take the other, or we curl up on our favorite dog beds and do a whole lot of nothing together. It's peaceful. And perfect.

While we dogs relax, Lisa visits with Emmet—her grown-up son—and Emily, who always smells like cinnamon and laughter. I am particularly fond of Emily. She gives the best ear rubs and sneaks me bites of things I'm probably not supposed to have.

But this Saturday, Lisa didn't grab the leash.

She didn't wear the sandals.

Instead, she made spicy shrimp and garlicky grits—*my favorite*—then left them on the stove. I watched her, confused. She knelt beside me, scratched behind my ears, and said, "I'll be back soon, sweet boy."

Then she left.

Alone.

Without me.

I sighed and laid down by the front door. It creaked a little as it shut, and I gave it one bark, just in case she forgot something. She didn't come back. Not right away.

Time passed in that strange way it always does when you're waiting for something important. I paced. I napped. I sniffed the grits but didn't jump (I *thought* about it). The shadows shifted on the floor.

And then—I heard it. A car. Gravel. Footsteps on the porch.

The doorknob turned.

I *exploded*.

The second it cracked open, I barreled through, barking with joy, tail spinning like a propeller. And there she was—a stranger, sure, but I could tell right away: she mattered.

She smelled like airports, overthinking, and something heavy she couldn't quite drop. But she also smelled like Lisa. Like safety. Like someone we'd been waiting for.

I danced around her legs, barking and wagging and leaping up just enough to place my front paws gently against her knees. She laughed—*really* laughed—and I liked that sound. A lot.

“Okay, okay, I get it—you're excited to see me,” she said.

She was right.

Lisa chuckled. “Meet Bullet the Wonderdog. He does this to everyone. Bullet loves all people and most dogs. But he's especially happy when a young lady visits.”

I gave one final bark, just to make sure she understood: *You're welcome here*, and then I zipped back inside, mission accomplished.

But I stayed close.

That night, after dinner and a lot of talking, I wandered down the hall and peeked into the guest room.

She was curled up tight in bed, facing the wall. I could tell she was trying not to think too hard—but also failing. Her whole body was tense, like maybe she was bracing for something. Or missing someone.

I hopped up onto the foot of the bed.

She didn't say a word.

Didn't push me off.

She just sighed. One of those long, deep, hollow human sighs. The kind that comes from somewhere behind the heart.

I curled into a ball near her feet and rested my chin against her leg.

After that, things got better.

She came with us to the market in the mornings. Walked beside me and Lisa. She made faces at the shrimp, asked questions, laughed sometimes. On the walk back, she'd talk to me. Not like *baby talk*, but like a real person. Like I could understand.

I didn't catch every word—*Sloane, fired, betrayal, credentials*,—but I didn't need to.

I could feel it.

She was carrying something too big for her heart. Something heavy and sharp. So I leaned against her. I licked her hand. I followed her from room to room, always nearby, always watching.

At night, I stayed at the foot of her bed. Always.

She gives me extra walks now. Extra pets. Sometimes a little piece of toast. She talks to me in the quiet hours, and I listen with my whole self.

Because love doesn't need words.

It just needs to *show up*.

And that's what I do.

Because that's the day Hannah came.

And from that moment on, I knew—she belonged to us.

And I belonged to her.

The End.