



Short Story Contest

Tails of Hope is a compilation of short stories featuring the work of 25 budding artists ranging from 5 to 12 years old. Children were asked to write a story about their furry friend and use their imagination to bring it to life. Tails of Hope demonstrates the love and appreciation that children have for animals of all shapes and sizes.

The Tails of Hope Initiative allows children to share relatable stories, helping to build awareness of their emotions, confidence, and communication skills.

Children are our next leaders, and as educators and professionals in the field, it is our goal to cultivate them to be kind, confident, and empathetic to animals of all kinds.

Special thanks to Pickering Animal Services, Pickering Public Library, and to HiFive Kids Dental & Braces for contributing to the success of the initiative.





Wish

A short story written by
Gloriana Waltus

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"To all the abandoned puppies"

Chapter 1

A lonely girl

The sun was shining very brightly over the city of Pickering. However, Anjalee, a 7th grader at St. Wilfrid Catholic School, was not in a good mood.



She walked through the school keeping her head low, trying to ignore the whispers and snickers that were thrown at her while she walked down the hallway. Once she

had successfully made it to her classroom without looking anyone in the eye, she finally looked up long enough to put her homework on her teacher's desk, find an empty seat in the back, and sit down.

“Hey Anjalee,” Amanda called. “What’s up with your outfit? You look like a kinder gardener!” she said loud enough for the whole class to hear.

An outburst of laughter echoed throughout the room just as the teacher walked in.

“Well, we certainly seem to be in high spirits this morning!” Ms. P says as she makes her way into the classroom.

The class progresses, and just as Ms. P turns around to write on the board, Amanda turns around and waves her phone at Anjalee. “Check discord,” she mouths.



Once Anjalee arrives home, she mutters a greeting to her mom, and then goes to her room and opens her laptop. She clicks on the discord app and opens up the group chat. She scrolls past the usual insults to find 1 unread message. It turns out to be an embarrassing meme of Anjalee trying to do a TikTok dance. Not only that, but with Anjalee’s parents being Sri Lanken, they made sure to emphasize that in the meme.



Anjalee closes the laptop and then buries her head in her arms silently crying. Then she decides to take a break and go for a walk outside. While she’s walking through her neighbourhood, she sees a stray puppy with a coat of fur that’s light brown sitting in an empty trash can. It doesn’t have a collar, and doesn’t seem harmful either. It looks hopefully up at her, wagging its tail.

Without a second thought, she picks it up, and for the first time that day, smiles.

Chapter 2

A new addition to the family

“But mom, I really want to keep her!” I say to my parents.

“We know you *want* to, but do you really need her?” my dad replies.

“Please, can I keep her?” I say.

“We’ll see,” my mom says. “Let’s take her to an animal shelter, and if this puppy has an owner and that person doesn’t show up, we can keep the puppy,” she finishes.

I jump for joy after she says that, squealing. After an hour or two, we take the puppy to the animal shelter.



They take the puppy into a room and they check if she’s vaccinated. I close my eyes for the split second they inject a needle in her arm. I don’t like watching people getting injected with something. It makes me feel kind of weird. A nice lady wearing a uniform tells me that they’ll try to find her owner, and if they don’t find her owner soon, they’ll let me keep her since we found her in the first place and no one else wants her.



For the first time in a long time, I finally feel happy to go to school. Thinking about the possibility of keeping that cute,

little puppy blocks out all of my classmates' insults. That day I walk down the hallways with my head held high instead of how I usually do. My classmates actually seem a little intimidated by me. I guess Amanda expected me to be crying after seeing that meme on discord. As soon as I get home, I ask my parents if the animal shelter called.

"You've got to be patient Anjalee," mom says putting her arms on my shoulders.

"That puppy isn't the only one they're taking care of. They've got many different animals to find homes for. You're going to have to wait



a few weeks before we get any information from them," she says taking her hands off my shoulders and giving me a plate of cookies and a glass of milk. The next day at school my confidence and high spirits are gone. My classmates are back to insulting me and taunting me as usual.

"Hey Anjalee, have you seen the latest Tik Tok dance?" Amanda asks. "Of course you haven't, you don't even have your own phone!" The entire class erupts in laughter. Later, during lunch, the boys in my class and a few of the girls are talking about some sort of singer.

All of a sudden Patrick says "Anjalee, do you know who Ice Spice is?"

Oh Oh! I have no clue who that's supposed to be! I act calm on the outside but there's a whole party going on in my head as I wrack my brain trying to figure out who she is.

I still don't know. A few seconds pass by. Then I finally come to a decision; which is nodding. My classmates are a little shocked by my mute answer. But Patrick smirks at me.

"Tell us who she is then," Patrick says. A few tense seconds go by. Some people pull their phones out and start filming me. Finally, I say, "I don't know".

For a second the whole room is silent. So silent I think they didn't hear me. Then everyone starts laughing and pointing and insulting me. I see people posting videos, texting, and smiling at the comments. Then, a tear slips from my face. Then another and another until I'm full-on sobbing.



Everyone stops looking at their phones and starts filming me again instead. Do these people have no feelings at all?

I walk home my spirits down in the dumps. I can't believe I let my classmates see me cry. Now the whole school will know that I don't know who Ice Spice is!

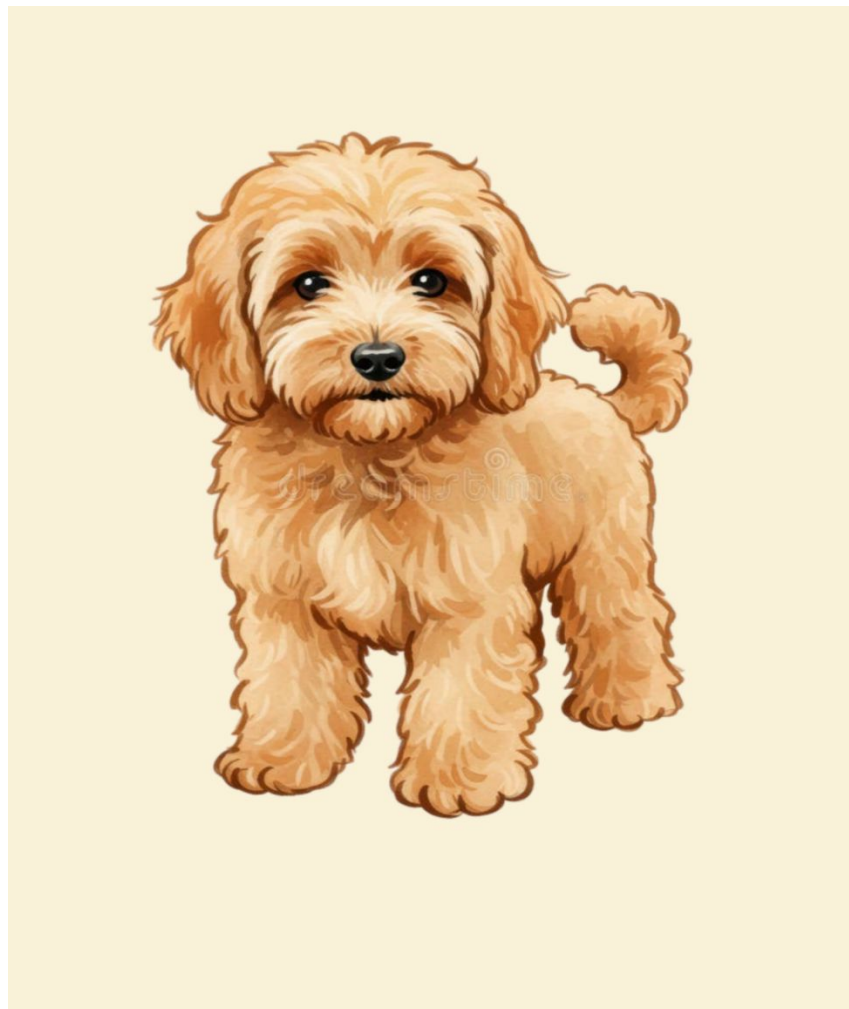
Argh! I walk inside my house and slam the door so hard the birds outside fly away. My mom runs to the door from the kitchen holding a spatula with chicken curry on it.

“What happened Anjalee?” my mom asks in Tamil studying my face.

“Nothing. I just...uh...lost dodgeball in gym,” I lie.

“Well, I’m glad you’re okay then,” she replies. “I have some good news for you though,”.

My face lights up. One look at her face and I just know that we’re going to get the puppy!



Chapter 3

Puppy Love

“Are we there yet?” I ask my mom for the hundredth time in 2 minutes.

My mom turns around from the passenger seat and gives another look. I stop asking her questions and start bouncing in the back seat instead.

After what feels like a million years, we make it to the animal shelter. I practically shoot out of the car running toward the doors at lightning speed.



The kind lady senses my excitement, and gently holds my hand to stop me from jumping up and down.

My parents finally catch up with us, and the lady takes us to a room marked puppies. She walks us to a cage all the way in the back. As she unlocks the cage to get my new puppy out, I jump up and down and squeal!

She gently puts the super cute puppy into my arms and the puppy nuzzles her fluffy head into my arms. Then the lady turns to my parents.



“This puppy is not a stray puppy,” she says. “Her previous owners were truly heartless. The owners of this puppy’s mom only wanted her mom because once she had puppies, they’d be able to sell them, and also keep a few of the puppies so they can do the same with them.”

“No one wanted this little puppy here, and they found out that she can’t have babies (puppies) so they just put her in a dark alleyway on a random street, and you happened to find her,” she finishes.



My parents beam at me, proud of me for saving that little puppy. Wait. I can’t just keep calling her puppy. I’ve got to name her! As my parents sign all the paperwork, I start

brainstorming names for my new puppy. How about Luna? Clifford? Lola? That sounds more like a koala’s name but it’ll do.

After we sign all the paperwork, we take Lola to the pet shop near by. We buy all the things we think she’ll need: dog food, a bed, a few toys, a leash, a cage, a collar, etc.

Once we get home, my mom says I can set up Lola's stuff in a corner of my room. I go upstairs with Lola in my arms, and I put her in the cage. "Don't worry Lola, you'll be out of there soon."



At school the next day, the bullying is as worse as ever. The whole 7th and 8th grade are laughing at me in the hallways after seeing the video that apparently went viral in the group chat.

I shut the door, and run up to my room. I slide down the door, put my knees to my chest, and start sobbing. Lola comes out of her bed and puts her fluffy head under my arms so that she's facing me. She gently rubs her face to mine and stays with me as I sob silently.



Chapter 4

A tough decision

The next few weeks go by quickly. It's even fallen into a routine. I go to school, get bullied, Lola comforts me, and my parents don't find out about it.

As I get home today it seems normal; I run up to my room, cry, and Lola comforts me. But today Lola seems determined to get me to tell my parents. She keeps pointing at the door and trying to use her paws to pull me up. It seems as though Lola has a point. I mean it's not like this is anything new. This whole bullying thing has been happening since the 5th grade! I decide to weigh my options over a walk.

I put Lola on a leash, and then guide her in the direction of the park. We stop at the park, and she almost learns how to fetch! I teach her a few more tricks, and I'm about to teach her more when I realize it's almost sunset.



I've also made my decision. I'm going to tell my parents about the bullying.

Chapter 5

The Talk

My mom stares blankly at me. “And you’ve been hiding all this from me?” she asks. I pull Lola closer to my face.

“We’re going to tell your principal about this,” she says angrily. I explain to her that I was too scared to tell her and that we don’t need to tell the principal. It’s not a big deal. But she insists it is.



The next day I find myself seated in a cold chair facing the principal. My mom spoke to her already, and the principal seems very shocked that all this has been happening under her nose. At least a dozen kids end up getting suspended, and the rest have warnings. The whole time I was talking to the principal, Lola seems very happy that I’ve finally told the principal about this.

Sometimes I wonder how she knows all this stuff. Maybe she can secretly understand English? Who knows?

Once I get back home, I don’t say anything to anyone. I grab Lola’s leash, and take her outside. We walk to the park and play fetch and do all the tricks I taught her.



I open up my laptop with Lola resting on my lap. I see I have two unread messages. The first one is the usual insults I haven't read from yesterday. But the next one shocks me. Every single one of my classmates has apologized for being mean to me! Hold on. They want to meet up at the library this afternoon. Could it be a trap? I decide not to take the bait.



The next day, when I wake up it's already 9:00! Today is bring your pet to school day, so I quickly put Lola on her leash and run to school. When I get inside my classroom, everyone is crowded near my desk.

Our teacher had to run an errand, so she's not in the room. They all slowly pull out their phones, showing me all the newly written nice messages, they've put about me in the group chat. Some of the girls walk up to me with tears in their eyes as they apologize to me. Little by little, everyone does the same.

Lola looks up at me as if to say "You just needed to tell your mom Anjalee!" Some even ask if I want to be friends with them. I say no to all of them, but I walk over to the two girls who have never said anything mean to me before. They smile as I walk over. We start to have a conversation, and soon we're the thickest of friends.



Chapter 6

An Amazing End

A few months go by, and soon my life is so much better than it was just a few months ago. I have two best friends, an awesome puppy, and no bullying to worry about.



I go on many walks with my dog, sometimes even along with my new friends! Some people are still not nice to me, but at least they don't risk saying anything.

Lola has honestly been a huge help! She almost never does anything troublesome; she is always open to trying new things. She even barks at the people who still try to be mean to me outside of school. She even chased a kid around the whole park once! He never picked on me again! I love my dog so much! I just know we'll always be fur-ever friends!



So now our story ends with a girl who wished to fit in,
and a puppy who wished for a loving family. They've both
found each other. The ultimate gift.



About The Author



Gloriana Marylin Waltus is an author who has a dream of becoming well-known for her books. Up till now she has written Furry Hope, Im-Possible, Best Friends Forever, and Wish. She is 12 years old, and grew up in Pickering, Ontario, Canada.

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