

Tails of Endearment
By Kaitlyn Smith

My “home,” if you could even call it that, had always been the streets. I grew up on the smell of fast food drifting out of restaurants and the sounds of cars honking at each other. Those cars, more specifically, what was inside of them, scared me. The humans who drove those cars were so mean to each other that I couldn’t imagine how they would treat a stray dog like me if I ever got in their way. So I didn’t.

Some of the other dogs I knew on the streets weren’t as smart. There was a little dog who would run across the street every day, somehow never getting hit by any of those previously mentioned, never-to-be-trusted humans in cars. He claimed that there was a restaurant across the street that had “friendly humans” who liked dogs and gave him pieces of food every now and then. Friendly humans? I knew better than to believe THAT!

If he wanted to risk getting tossed in the pound, he could go right ahead. Who cared if he always came back smelling like bacon? I wasn’t craving bacon THAT much, okay?

Well, maybe I was.

Anyway, one night I was out for a walk, and I noticed the sound of human feet walking behind me. That was odd, since I went for walks at night when most humans were tucked away in their warm and cozy beds. I turned around and, sure enough, there was an adult female human following me. I panicked and started walking faster.

But this human, who was, presumably, conspiring with the dog catcher, just stopped walking. Normally the dog catcher (and those working with him) could outrun most dogs. I turned myself around and just stared at this human. We both looked at each other for a while.

She appeared oddly approachable. Okay, so maybe this human didn’t want to see me locked up in the pound, as I had previously thought.

In fact, she was sitting down on the sidewalk, calling out to me: “Come here, honey...I won’t hurt you.”

Surely she was mistaking me for another dog. My name wasn’t honey. I had never even had a name. But even as I came closer to her, she kept calling me the same thing. Maybe this word “honey” was a term of endearment... I had no experience with those, so you’ll have to forgive my ignorance.

Despite what I thought I knew about humans, I took a chance and continued walking up to this lady. And when she reached out and started moving her hand from my head down to my neck, I knew she was harmless. I had heard other dogs talk fondly about something they called “being

pet” but I had never experienced it before. I liked it and wagged my tail so she would know. “You’re as sweet as honey, aren’t you?” she asked when I started licking her face.

Before I knew it, she situated me in her car and drove me to her home. My new home. I spent the night sleeping in her warm and cozy bed. In the morning, I hopped out of bed and trotted over to the window.

From my new best friend’s second story apartment, I could still see the same restaurants and cars on the street below. Except now I didn’t smell the fast food or hear the cars honking. Instead, I heard the radio playing music in the kitchen and smelled bacon being fried. My new best friend was in the kitchen cooking breakfast.

As soon as she saw me walk in, she piled a blue dog dish full of freshly cooked bacon. When she set the bowl on the floor for me to eat, I noticed that the side of it had recently been painted with some letters that formed a word. I was not yet fluent in reading the Human language, but I did know the word that she had painted on the bowl.

Honey.