

Half A Dog for Emma!

German title: Emma und der halbe Hund
English translation: Paul Davenport

SUMMARY

Emma is crazy about dogs. She's got them everywhere: on calendars, posters, stickers, t-shirts and socks.

But unfortunately not one of them is real! And it's no use begging her Mum all the time, because they live in a city apartment where it isn't allowed to have a dog.

One day Emma and her friends see a sign on a tree with the photo of a dog on it and a phone number.

Who would have thought that this little note would make a great change in Emma's life?...

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Emma is crazy about dogs. She's got more than a hundred of them: on calendars, posters, stickers, t-shirts and socks.

Unfortunately, not one of them is real, because her family lives in a city apartment where it isn't allowed to keep a dog. When Emma goes to school in the morning, it's like walking down dog lane. She knows exactly where Nero, Tarzan or Browser live. Today, Tarzan's got a thick bandage around his paw. Emma stops and pats his head.

On Saturday, when Emma goes to the market with her mother, she shows more interest in dogs than in cucumbers or lettuce. Her Mum is busy buying some flowers when Emma suddenly notices the largest and most beautiful dog she has ever seen. The huge dog, tied to a tree, gets up and wags its tail. Now it is almost as big as Emma herself!

'His name is Eddy,' says a man carrying a box of plants. 'You can pat him if you want. He won't bite.'

'I know,' says Emma. 'I understand dog language.'

Emma's mother comes back. 'Just as I thought! You're with a dog again. As you can see, my little girl is crazy about dogs,' she says to the man.

He laughs and says, 'I like people who like dogs!' When he sees that Emma and her mother are also heading for the parking lot, he lets Emma take the dog on a leash.

What fun!

'That's my car over there,' says the man.

With a sigh Emma says goodbye to Eddy.

'Please, Mum,' says Emma, 'can I have a dog. Just a little tiny weeny one?'

'You know that's not possible,' her mother says. "So stop asking!"

A couple of days after that, Emma is playing with her friends in the park when Clara suddenly shouts, 'Look, look! Over there – there's a doggy paddling in the fountain – in trouble!'

'Maybe it can't swim. We've got to rescue it!' , murmurs Emma.

Without further ado she climbs into the fountain. The little dog is frightened and tries to get away from her, but Emma holds it tight and pulls it out of the water.

'One of us has got to take it home,' says Emma and looks at her friends.

'We've got a cat already...' Alice says.

'My father is allergic to animals...' says Robby.

'My mother is dead against animals,' says Emma, 'but I'll give it a try!'

'What's this all about?' Mamma says with wide-open eyes, as she opens the door.

Emma is standing there, wet to the bone with a little dog in her arms.

'It's an emergency!' says Emma. 'He almost drowned.'

'Emma saved his life,' confirms Robby.

'Can I keep him? Just for a few days?' Emma pleads. 'Look at him, Mum! Poor dog! He's so small and all alone.'

'Maybe his owner took him out to the woods and left him there alone,' says Alice with a grim voice.

Just then Emma's mother notices the tag on the dog's collar with a telephone number on it. 'I think the first thing we'll do is call the family,' she says with a smile.

The owner of the dog isn't at all surprised when the children come to his house with the dog.

'Tiffany ran away because the workers were making so much noise with their power drills,' the man says. 'She often runs away, takes a dip in the pond or the fountain and then comes back. She loves to swim. But thanks just the same for bringing her back.'

The three 'lifesavers' look at each other sheepishly. What the man said sounded like they had saved a duck from drowning!

That night in bed Emma is in a very bad mood. She is angry at her soft toys. 'You're just fake dogs! You can't bark, you can't wag your tail, you don't even smell like a dog. You're not happy to see me when I come. You're good for nothing. Nothing! Nothing at all!' Her eyes flash with anger and she throws them, one after another, onto the floor. A huge teardrop rolls down her cheek. If only she had a dog! Just a tiny little real one!

The next day as Emma and her friends are inline skating, Robby spots a sign on a tree. There's a photo of a dog on it and the words:

*Wanted: Someone who likes dogs
to walk my dog Florian
Ina Moll, 4 Rabbit Lane, tel. 60601214*

'Ina Moll is the name of my big sister's music teacher,' Robby wonders.

Emma is excited. 'Let's call her up right away,' she says.

'I haven't got my cell phone with me,' Robby says.

'There's that old telephone-booth round the corner,' says Alice.

They hurry off. Emma goes inside the booth and dials the number.

Robby and Alice crowd around her, all ears.

'Hello' says a friendly voice on the phone.

'I'm calling about the dog...,' Emma says.

'Oh, yes! Great!' answers the friendly voice. 'Can you come to my place right away so we can talk about it?'

It's only a stone's throw to Rabbit Lane. Especially on inline skates. And yes - Mrs. Moll is the nice music teacher and her dog Florian is just as nice. The first thing he does is jump into Emma's arms. It's love at first sight for both of them. Emma runs her fingers through Florian's fur and forgets everything around her.

Mrs. Moll is very happy that she's found someone like Emma to walk with Florian. She had a knee operation and has to walk on crutches.

Emma is like a different person now. She gets up when her alarm clock rings in the morning. She sings to herself and is in a good mood. She spends all her free time now outside with Florian. Sometimes Alice and Robby come with her.

One evening when Emma comes back with Florian, Mrs. Moll is cutting her roses in the garden. Emma notices that her crutches are leaning up against the apple tree.

'I'll be able to walk again soon,' Mrs. Moll says and gives Emma a big smile.

Emma makes a long face.

'What's wrong? Aren't you pleased to hear that?' Mrs. Moll asks with a disappointed look on her face.

'Sure I am,' says Emma slowly. 'But then you won't need me anymore, will you?'
'Oh, Emma!' Mrs. Moll laughs. 'Of course I'll need you! And Florian would miss you so much he'd get sick if you stopped coming, that's for sure!'

'Do you know what?' Ina Moll says. 'Florian is half yours. We can divide him up. Would you prefer the front or the back half? It's your choice! Or you can have the upper or the lower half!'

'That's crazy!' We can't divide – '

'Or he's yours Mondays and mine Tuesdays...' Mrs. Moll continues. 'No, that won't do. I believe I have a better idea: he's yours during the day and mine at night!'

'You mean that Florian – all of him from head to tail – is really mine by day - all day?'
Emma's eyes are open wide.

'That's it!' says Mrs. Moll. 'And you can come for him whenever you want.'

'Yippee! I've got to go home and tell everyone the good news!' Emma cries.
She takes Florian on the leash and hurries off.

When Emma's father comes home from work, Emma runs down the stairs and cries:

'Dad, Dad! I've got a real dog of my own. Florian! Mrs. Moll gave him to me!'

'But baby, you know that's not okay...' Dad says with a sigh. 'When will you finally understand that?'

'But it is okay! Emma says. "Cause Florian is only half a dog! He belongs to me during the day. You're the one who's got to understand, not me!'

And then she told her father the whole story. And her mother, too. And anyone else who would listen.

And on that day, Emma was the happiest girl in the world.