



A TALE FOR YOUNG READERS

# The Silent Benefactor

*A story of loyalty, told without words*

BY GHULAM HUSSAIN MEMON

---

**A**mir had lived with his maternal grandparents since childhood. Every day, once school and his lessons at the madrassah were done, he would make his way to his grandfather's little grocery shop in the afternoon, bringing along lunch from home for his uncle besides. His uncle taught at a nearby school. From morning until noon, it was Grandfather who minded the shop; when the uncle arrived at midday, Grandfather would head home.

Whenever uncle and nephew sat down together for their mid-day meal, a dog would appear without fail, tail wagging, and stand quietly nearby. Amir would toss it half a piece of bread, sometimes a whole one. The dog would eat it and trot away. His uncle often remarked, "You've quite spoiled that dog." Amir would answer, "But Uncle, it only ever eats the one piece." He had always had a deep fondness for animals and birds.

A few days later, when his uncle scolded him once more, Amir said, "These creatures need our love and attention. And besides, dogs are famous the world over for their loyalty and their watchfulness." "But what need have we of a watchdog?" his uncle replied. "We fasten the shop with several sturdy locks whenever we leave."

One morning, as Amir's grandfather set off from home towards the shop, he discovered that he did not have the keys with him. His son had dropped them somewhere along the way the night before. Now how was the shop to be opened? It was far too



early for the locksmith, and in any case the market always opened late. Even so, he went along to have a look. There, in front of the shop, sat the dog. He tried to shift it aside, but it would not budge, and with it planted there, breaking the lock seemed a troublesome business.

Just then, Amir happened to pass by the shop on his way to school. He too had heard that the key was lost. Thinking of his grandfather's difficulty, he abandoned his walk to school and stopped at the shop instead. The moment the dog saw him approaching, it rose to its feet and lay back down across his feet. And there, exactly where the dog had been sitting, lay the missing keys.

Grandfather snatched them up at once, staring in astonishment. Amir, too, had watched it all unfold, and understood in an instant what had happened. The dog then rose and slipped away. Once the shop was open, Amir carried on to school.

Not long after, the neighbourhood watchman came by to buy some flour, and remarked to Grandfather, "I saw the strangest thing outside your shop today. It was bitterly cold last night, and yet a dog sat outside your shop the whole night through. Ordinarily, in weather like that, even animals seek shelter behind a wall to keep out of the cold."

The truth of the matter was this. The night before, when Amir's uncle had locked up the shop and slipped the keys into his pocket, they had fallen unnoticed to the ground. Soon afterwards, the dog arrived, and seeing the keys lying there, settled itself over them so that no one else might carry them off.

It sat there the whole night through, in the bitter cold, keeping watch over the keys and the shop alike. Grandfather was deeply moved by the dog's devotion. As for the uncle, he felt rather ashamed, for it was he who had always told Amir off for feeding

the dog. From that day on, he himself would often set something aside for it to eat.

