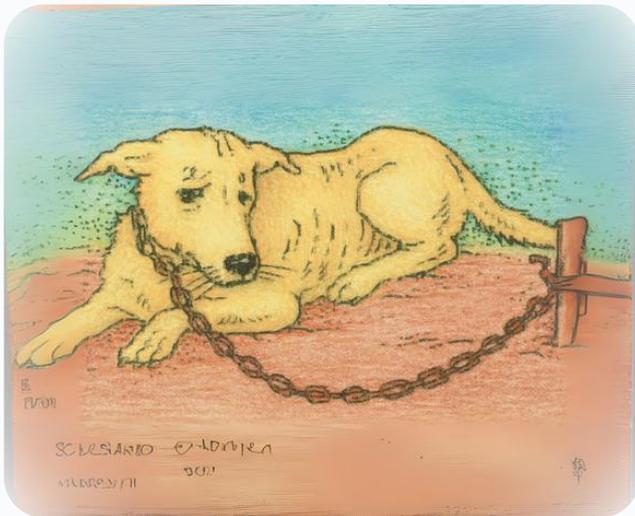


Palesa finds a friend



by Pandora Alberts

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Obo in Trouble

Palesa lived with her mother and her younger twin brothers, Tshepo and Tshepang. Next door lived Mrs Malusi. She had a sad brown dog, called Obo, chained up in her yard. Often, Obo's water bowl was dry. He became very thirsty, especially when the sun was hot.

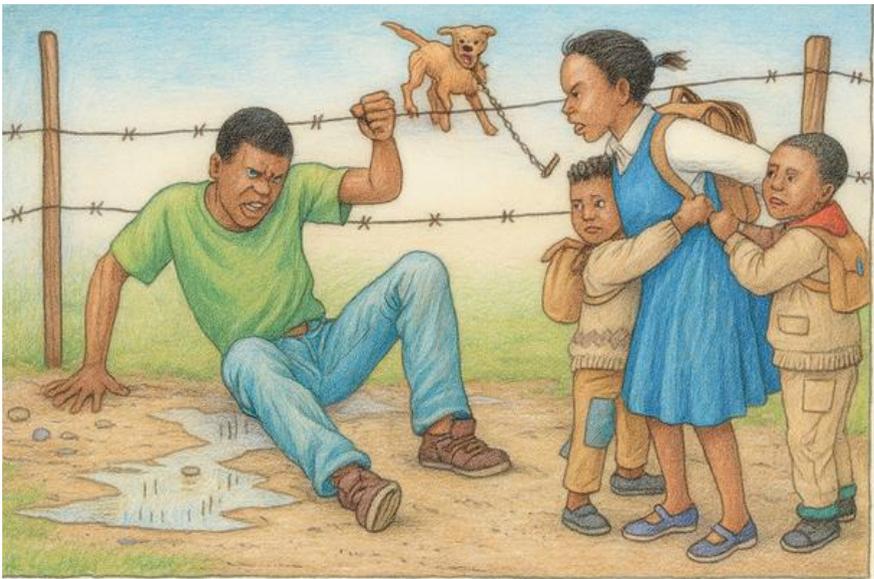
Palesa's mother worked far away and the children were often alone. The brown dog Obo liked Palesa. She talked to him when he was lonely. Sometimes she gave Obo a piece of her school lunch. The dog was very thin and hungry. Mrs Malusi did not feed him well. When she remembered, she would throw a piece of mieliepap onto the ground for Obo to eat.



One day when Palesa was coming home from school with the twins, she saw a dreadful sight. A big, bad boy was throwing stones at Obo. Obo was jumping and barking. Obo yelped when a stone hit him on the head. Palesa was so angry that she ran at the boy and pushed him over. All the people in the street laughed because he looked so silly, sitting in the mud.

“Go away!” yelled Palesa, “Leave that dog alone!”

The boy picked himself up and walked away, but turned round and threatened Palesa. He pulled a horrible face. “I'm going to make trouble for you,” he said. This made Palesa very frightened, but she tried not to show it.

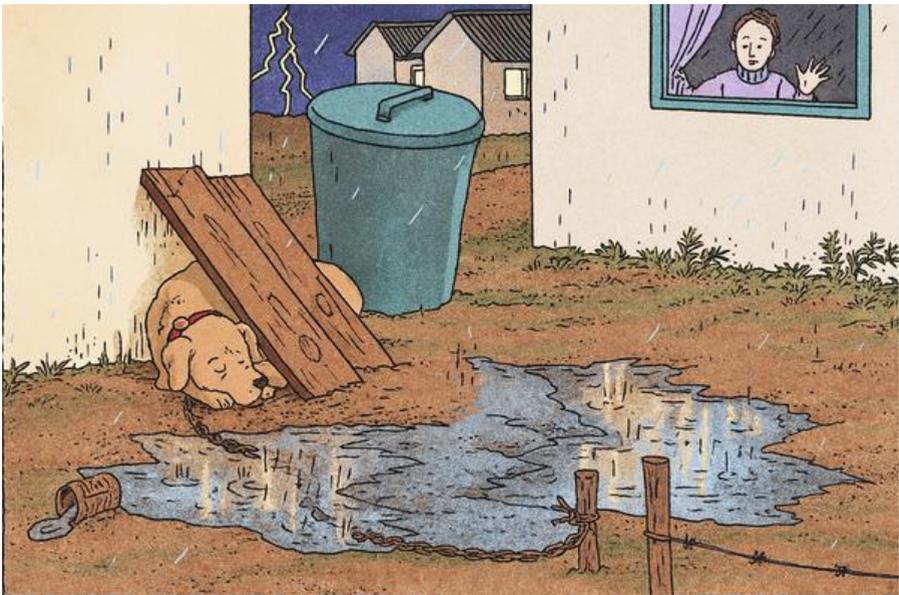


She took the twins home because they were crying. Luckily their mother was in the house waiting for them. “Watch out for that boy,” her mother said. “He does nasty things.”

The dreadful storm

That night there was a terrible storm. Palesa lay snug and warm between Tshepo and Tshepang. She listened to the thunder crashing. The lightning made her house look blue and strange. Then came the rain, like hands drumming on the roof.

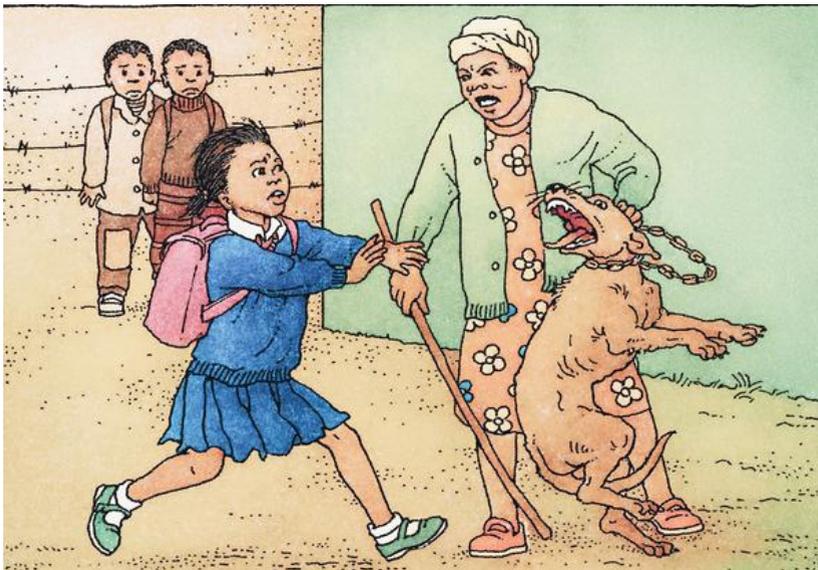
“How lucky I am to be warm, dry and safe,” Palesa thought happily.



Then she heard Obo barking outside in the rain. He was frightened and cold. She did not feel happy any more. How could she help him? It was still raining in the morning.

Outside the twins wanted to splash in the puddles. Palesa had to drag them past Mrs Malusi's house. Mrs Malusi was in the yard. She was hitting Obo with a stick, and he was yelping. "Bad dog!" she shouted. "Bad dog. You were barking all night!"

Palesa felt herself becoming very angry. She was a bit afraid of Mrs Malusi, but she could not bear to watch Obo being beaten. "Stop, stop!" she screamed.



Mrs Malusi threw down the stick and turned on her. “If you like this dog so much, you had better take him. I don't want him any more!”

Mrs Malusi pushed Obo towards Palesa. Obo looked at Palesa with his soft brown eyes and wagged his tail. It almost looked like he was smiling. Palesa smiled back and stroked him.

Obo finds a new home

Mother was not very pleased. “He is a big dog. He will eat lots of food. Where will he sleep?”



“I will work at the shop for Mr Hlongwane on Saturdays, to help pay for his food,” Palesa said. “He can sleep next to our bed on the old green blanket. Please, please, please,” she whispered.

Mother smiled. “I don't like the way Obo was treated either,” she said. “Yes, you can keep him. Remember he is your responsibility.” Palesa danced and skipped all the way to school, she was so happy. When she came home, her mother had already made supper. She had fed Obo some good food.

He stood in the doorway. When he saw Palesa he ran up to her and covered her hands with doggie kisses.

“I have to work late this evening,” said Palesa's mother. “Look after Tshepo and Tshepang. Stay in the house when it is dark and be safe. Don't unlock the door till you hear my voice.”

Palesa promised she would do as mother said. She made sure the twins were fed and washed; then she did her homework for a while.

Later they watched television. All the time Obo sat next to her. Sometimes she stroked his ears.



“You are going to be a beautiful dog, Obo,” she told him. His tail wagged.

When it was dark she bolted the door and put the twins to bed. She was not afraid. Mother had to work late quite often. She was used to taking care of everything.

Later on she climbed into bed next to the sleeping twins. Obo curled up beside them on his green blanket.

Obo saves his new family

All of a sudden the door was kicked open, the lock broken. There stood the bad boy who had threatened Palesa. She was frozen with fear.

“I've come to teach you a lesson,” he said. Palesa opened her mouth to scream but before the boy could walk through the doorway, Obo jumped at him with a growl like a lion. The boy turned to run, but Obo tore his trousers and bit his leg with his big white teeth.

The boy was screaming. Palesa could hear him scream all the way down the street as Obo continued snapping at his heels. The screams became fainter and fainter.



Much later Obo came back, his tail wagging and a smile on his face. The twins had slept through all the noise! Shakily, Palesa pushed a chair against the door.

She knelt down and put her arms round Obo's neck and hugged him.

“Thank you, Obo,” Palesa whispered. “Now we can keep each other safe always.”

He covered her with doggie kisses and lay down happily on his green blanket. He had found love and a warm home.



ACTIVITIES

- Let's revise the Five Freedoms for Animals
- The pictures show that Palesa has empathy for a dog in her community
- Match the freedoms with the pictures





This book promotes the development of compassion,
respect and justice for all life, through literacy.



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