

# What Happens In...

By: Judy Wright

"I can't believe Charlie's moving. I just... can't believe it!" Snoopy heaved a slow, sorrowful sigh, pulling the crisp, October air deeply into his lungs. As his chest rose, the fluffy peak of Woodstock's head briefly intruded on his view.

"Don't worry, Snoop... I mean you got the city to re-zone the property, right? Now it's multi-family... you get to keep the house! That's good news."

"True..." Snoopy agreed, "I mean just because the Browns have decided to pick-up and move doesn't mean I want to leave... But... how will I ever make the payments?" Snoopy's eyes searched the expansive canvas of the heavens, as if by some miracle he might find the answer



to his predicament stenciled on the underside of a passing cloud. He scratched his ear thoughtfully. *At least Woodstock is here* he mused. The meager weight of the tiny bird was barely noticeable, but like Linus and his blanket, Woodstock's company offered Snoopy a sense of security. "At least we stuck it to those bankers, right?" Snoopy chuckled, "I mean what a bunch of..." He let the insult hang between them, inviting Woodstock to fill in the blank. Snoopy didn't really have the vocabulary those bankers deserved. "I mean fifteen-grand for this little shack?"

Seriously? It's extortion!" Snoopy's paw tapped the rough, wooden siding, telegraphing his true feeling to the little, red doghouse. Snoopy loved his house. Like the cherry atop a sundae, it was that extra little something that made his life complete.

"Pions," Woodstock spat.

"Ha!" Snoopy guffawed. His sudden expulsion of breath upset the balance of the small bird, and he fluttered gracefully to rest on the tip of the dog's round, damp nose.

"You gotta snap out of it!" Woodstock said, staring piercingly into Snoopy's moist eyes. "You can do this! I know it's not the best idea, but it's the only one we got."

"We?!? We?!? You said you won't come..."

"Can't... not won't," Woodstock interrupted. "There's no place for me there. It wouldn't make sense. It would just draw needless attention, and get us both kicked out."

"Sure," Snoopy huffed, "like a dog has any more business in a casino than a bird?"

"Uh... seeing-eye dog... therapy dog... accessory to the rich and blonde! You guys can go anywhere! Sheesh, I certainly never heard of a bird getting to ride in first class."

Snoopy sighed again. The blast of air dislodged the bird once more, and Woodstock gracefully resumed his perch on the dog's round belly.

The silence hung heavily between the two friends. "It's a one shot deal, Snoop. You're in, you're out.... and the house is yours! Free and clear. You can do this!"

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His mouth tasted as ripe as a trash heap rotting in the desert sun. His scorched throat clenched in protest as the syrupy salvia scraped its way down his throat. "Ugh..." Snoopy groaned. His eyelids flickered opened, but the blinding sunlight forced him to slam them shut once more. Gingerly, Snoopy began to move his stiff limbs. The paw pinned beneath his body was completely numb, and an ache throbbed somewhere deep inside his right hip. "Ugh.... what the heck happened?" Snoopy demanded in a hoarse growl.

Dragging himself into a seated position, Snoopy stared in confusion at the jumper tangled around his matted hide. Stitched in bright, gold lettering were the words SERVICE ANIMAL. "Service animal?" he barked. "Service animal?" Snoopy's stinging eyes swept his surroundings: dirty green plywood, stained concrete, a chain-link gate. Stifled whines and intermittent yipping filtered in from all around him. And finally, the reality of his situation began to set-in. Snoopy was in the pound.

Panic gripped him, clenching around his chest like a Chihuahua's training harness. His labored breathing rattled in his ears, and it was a few moments before he realized that a musical whistling was emanating from somewhere above his head. Glancing up, Snoopy spotted a soft, yellow ball embedded in the gloomy canopy of his enclosure. The ball bobbed gently back and forth, and as Snoopy's eyes locked on the yellow poof, a familiar voice whispered, "It's about time! Thought you were gunna sleep all day."

"Woodstock? Is that you?"

"Shhhhhh! For heaven sake, keep your voice down. And stop staring! You want the keepers to know I'm here?"

Snoopy's foggy brain tried to process the rapid stream of words. Defeated by the effort, Snoopy slumped back onto the rough concrete, groaning in pain and confusion.

"Oh, suck it up you big baby!" Woodstock chirped.

"What... is... happening?" Snoopy moaned.

"You got yourself thrown in the pound, genius. Remember?"

"Well... actually... no. I don't remember. I don't remember anything!"

"Shhhhhh! Look, we can't talk now. The keepers are everywhere. The pound will be closing in about half an hour. As soon as they're gone, I'll get you out. Then we can and try to reboot that pea-sized brain of yours. Ok?"

A feeble "Ugh..." was all Snoopy could manage in reply.

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Once Woodstock had wrestled open the latch to the chain link gate, it was only a matter of a few wiggles and a sucked in belly before Snoopy was free. The pound and all its inhabitants were slumbering, as the two friends moved stealthily through the narrow channels between the pens. Perched precariously atop Snoopy's sloped brow, Woodstock urged his friend on with whispered instructions.

"Where are we going?" Snoopy hissed, as he eased the rear gate closed.

"The casino of course," Woodstock replied. "We've been through too much to slink home with our tails between our legs."

"Pff... You don't even have a tail..." Snoopy muttered. A blinding light swept suddenly across the two friends, and Snoopy quickly ducked behind one of the large trashcans clustered behind the facility. As the car's headlights retreated down the long alleyway, Snoopy released the breath he had been holding, and collapsed back against the building.

Woodstock came to rest firmly on the dog's nose, as he glared into Snoopy wide, innocent eyes.

"What?"

"Oh, please," Woodstock huffed, "Those puppy dog eyes won't work on me. I know you're exhausted, but we've got to get back to that casino. You were in there for hours. You must remember something!"

"Well, I don't alright? There's some jumbly images, but really... nothing."

"Well, did you make it to the slot machines? Did she go into the casino, or head straight up to her rooms? Were they suspicious? Did they think you were part of her entourage? And, where the heck did you get that ridiculous jumper?"

"Ugh..." Snoopy groaned, paws clamped over his ears, "you're making it worse!"

"Ok, fine, fine. Sorry old buddy," Woodstock soothed stroking the bony bridge of the dog's snout. He fluttered up to the dog's head. His small feet slowly kneaded the folds of fur just behind Snoopy's ears.

"Well, you remember her don't you?" he asked softly.

A dazzling image flashed through Snoopy's mind. Rhinestone-studded jeans tapering down to purple, razor-thin stilettos. Strands of gold and silver draped round her neck and dripping from her ears. The whole effect made Snoopy think of a tinsel-draped Barbie doll. Except of course for the raven, black hair. Snoopy chuckled, "Who could forget her!"

To Be Continued...

