

Jack the Homework Eater



Mitt Ray

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Written by Mitt Ray



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New Dog

Alex sat on his chair in front of his study table with a pencil in his hand. He was resting it on a white piece of paper. He was watching the British Bulldog that was staring at him. Alex had his feet up on his chair, like he was protecting himself. And he seemed scared. Instead of concentrating on his homework, he was busy eyeing this British Bulldog. He had to finish his homework for tomorrow or face embarrassment. His teacher would punish him in front of the class if he didn't finish it.

But the dog distracted him from doing any work; it even prevented him from doing anything he enjoyed doing in the house.

The dog was Jack. He was actually a harmless dog who liked Alex a lot. He even wagged his little tail while he watched Alex sitting at his table doing his homework. He wanted to make friends with Alex, but Alex wasn't ready – not because this dog had done anything bad to him, but because he was scared of dogs. They all frightened the life out of him.

Jack had been brought in from a nearby shelter to replace Chester, the Rottweiler, who had recently died. Chester had lived to the ripe old age of fourteen. Chester was the one who had instilled a fear of dogs in Alex. Since the day Alex was born, Chester had always been nice to him. Every day as Alex grew up, they became closer to each other. But when Alex turned six, he did something stupid. He petted Chester while he was eating his food. This made Chester cross and he bit Alex. After that incident, more than three years ago now, Alex kept away from all dogs he came across, including Chester. That was why he was so scared of Jack.

After Chester died, Alex's parents Mark and Mary decided to replace him with another dog. Alex begged his parents not to bring in a new one. At first they listened to him, but after missing Chester for a couple of weeks, and finding it hard to get by without him, they decided to replace him. They went to their friend Rachel's dog shelter, as she had been begging them to adopt a dog from there. Rachel was always looking for good homes for the dogs that were brought to her shelter.

Mark and Mary decided to adopt a little dog so that it wouldn't scare Alex. They felt that a small, cute dog would reignite the friendliness Alex used to have towards dogs and make him get along well with them again. They had plenty of choice at this shelter. There were Yorkshire Terriers, Daschunds, Beagles, and other tiny dogs. Some of the dogs were left free so that they could roam everywhere around the shelter, while a few of them were kept behind wire mesh.

Mark and Mary took their time selecting their dog. They wanted to pick a friendly dog that could keep Alex company without frightening him. Rachel walked round with them, explaining the best and the worst qualities of each and every dog they came across.

Dogs came toward them and they petted them. Also, whenever they approached a cage, the dogs in there came out to greet them – some with loud barks and others with a wagging tail and a dangling tongue, which made them look like they were smiling!

Of all the dogs they saw, a medium-sized, brown and white dog called Jack caught their attention. Rachel told them that Jack was a British Bulldog who had been abandoned by his old owners

because of a strange habit he had. At first they had thought his unique behaviour was funny, but then it had grown into a problem so they had got rid of him.

Jack was a mixture of tan and white. His back and sides were mainly tan, while his stomach and chest were mainly white, and so were his legs. His tail was mostly brown, but at the tip of it there was a white patch. His ears and temples were brown while the rest of his face was white. His neck was also white. The white patch on the top of his head between the droopy brown ears really stood out. He had a sweet, flat snout and big brown eyes. As soon as he saw Mark and Mary approach his cage, he ran to greet them on his stubby white legs. He wagged his tiny tail and gave them a friendly look right in their eyes. He looked like he was lazy, but happy and loving – a typical characteristic of bulldogs.

As soon as they saw Jack, Mark and Mary wanted to have him right away. They had always longed for a bulldog. Bulldogs were known to be friendly, loving and protective and good with children. They didn't need much exercise so this fitted perfectly into their lifestyle. They hadn't got a bulldog before as they were normally very expensive and they always felt that it was not worthwhile to spend that much for any dog. Also, the main reason why Jack had been abandoned by his previous owners didn't seem to bother Mark and Mary at all, so they asked Rachel to open the gate. Jack rushed out towards them. Mark and Mary knelt down and began to pet him. Jack started wagging his brown tail with the white tip even faster. As soon as they saw this, they knew they had to take him home. So they told Rachel that they had made their choice and this made her extremely happy. She gave them both a hug, and even one to Jack too!

Rachel put a black collar around Jack's neck and handed him over to Mary. She hooked a black leash that used to belong to Chester onto the collar and walked him home with Mark.

This was Jack's first day with Alex's family, but he was getting along well. He walked around the house, explored it and discovered the passages and the rooms. Mary and Mark let him wander wherever he wanted to, as they allowed their dogs to be free.

When Alex got home from school, he was surprised to see a dog at the door of the house since his parents had told him that they wouldn't bring home a new one.

Jack went up to Alex with a friendly wagging tail, but this still scared the life out of Alex and he screamed out, "MOM, MOM, SAVE ME!" His mother rushed out to see that the door was open and Jack was outside facing Alex, who was on the other side of the gate. Alex had fled out there as soon as he saw the dog.

Alex's mother ordered Jack to stay while she welcomed her son home. Alex ran into the house as quickly as he could, and then the arguments started. He climbed on to one of the couches, still in his blue and white school uniform. He was so scared he didn't even wait to take off his shoes or his rucksack before jumping onto the couch. He had heard and read about British Bulldogs being dangerous, as in the old days they were used to bait bulls. Also, this bulldog looked threatening, so he was more terrified of it than he was of Chester. He at least had known Chester, but he didn't know anything about Jack, the bulldog. British bulldogs can look very scary with their wide jaws, but they are actually very friendly with kids and everyone else.

As soon as Alex felt safe on the couch, he started yelling. "You promised me you wouldn't get another dog!"

"I never promised you anything," snapped Mary.

"You said you weren't going to bring home a new dog," replied Alex.

"No, you asked us not bring in another dog and your father and I said we would see. We never promised you anything," said his mother.

"You always go back on your word. You never listen to me. No one cares about what I want, you just care about yourselves," Alex accused her. "Look at the way that dog is staring at me! He's going to attack me and kill me. You're going to lose your son to a dog," he added.

"Stop acting stupid and get off the sofa. Jack won't harm you, he's a very friendly dog," Mary replied.

"So you trust the dog more than me now? You have known me for nine years, but suddenly you get a dog, which you have known for a day, and you trust it more than me," grumbled Alex.

"I said, stop making a big fuss about it," answered Mary.

"Please, Mommy, please, take the dog away. I am begging you, please," whined Alex.

"No, no, no," replied his mother.

"Mommy, I am giving you a choice. Either the dog goes or I do," declared Alex.

But Mary called his bluff. "The dog stays. You can go if you want to."

Alex just stood on the couch and stared at his mother in anger and disappointment. He felt that that was the best he could do, but it hadn't worked. He would have to spend the rest of his life, or at least until he was eighteen and could leave home, with that scary looking dog in his house. There was no way he could get rid of it.

"Why should I listen to you when you don't you ever listen to me, and why are my opinions never heard in this house? It's always you or Dad who gets your way," pouted Alex.

"Well, it's my house and I am your mother, so you will always have to listen to me. That's all there is to it," answered Mary.

This angered Alex so much that he sat cross-legged on the couch, feeling let down and lost. He knew there was no use arguing now. When his mother used the words, "I am your mother, so you will have to listen to me," he knew she was going to dictate the whole situation and not listen to him one bit. So he gave up. There was nothing he could do, other than spend most of his time in fear now.

"Take your legs and shoes off the sofa and stop being ridiculous. The dog is harmless. Now, come to the dining room and have something to eat. I am making you some pasta," said Mary.

Alex took off his shoes but just sat there on the couch, helplessly staring at the dog. He was really, really sad. The dog kept staring back at him, with its tail wagging uncontrollably. Jack wanted to find out who this new person was. Jack had come across Alex's scent earlier in the house, but this was

the first time he had properly seen the boy and this really excited him. Jack wondered why Alex sat on the couch looking at him instead of petting or playing with him.

After waiting for some time and not receiving any sort of affection at all from Alex, Jack made his way into the kitchen where Mary was cooking. First making sure that everything was safe, Alex got off the couch and had a shower. He ate his pasta and then went out for a long walk in order to spend time away from the dog. He came home and started doing his homework. So, there he was, at the study table, a yellow pencil in his hand which rested on his half-finished homework, staring at Jack, hoping to get rid of the terror caused by the dog and trying his best to concentrate on his homework.

It was only with great difficulty and good focus that he finally finished it. He never liked doing his homework. He only did it because he was afraid of being punished. When he got punished, he was told off in front of the class and then sent to the detention room in school. His parents were called up and told what their son had been up to. Alex hated this embarrassment and the angry scolding his parents gave him. The best way to avoid it all was by doing his homework, so he did it.

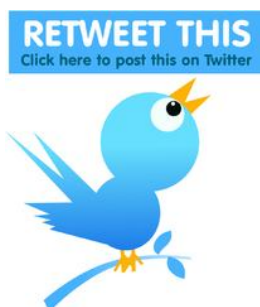
Alex hated going to school, too. He didn't have any friends there, only enemies who bullied him and troubled him day after day. He wasn't very good at his studies, or at sports, and he was a very shy kid, so he found it very hard to make friends.

After finishing his homework, Alex had nothing else to do. He couldn't go out as it was late and he had no friends to chat to on Facebook, so he went to his room. He had wanted to watch some TV, but he didn't want to do something in a room where he could be alone with Jack. The television was in the lounge where Jack could easily come and go as he pleased.

Alex had never been this scared of Chester. If ever Chester got too close, Alex always ordered him away. Chester would listen to him. Alex had still been Chester's boss, even though he bit Alex. But Jack was new in this house, and Alex didn't want to take any risks. So, for today, he tried to avoid the dog completely and hoped that, as time went by, the dog would learn to keep away from him.

Alex made sure that Jack was outside his bedroom, closed the door, climbed into his bed, covered himself with a duvet and went to sleep.

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