



IT'S STORY TIME

Enjoy reading this story with your family or to your furry friends!
Fun twist: Set up your furry friends and act out the story!



THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER

Have you ever been so cold that no matter how bundled up in layers of thick puffy clothes you were, you just couldn't get warm? Well, that wasn't the case when little Suzy the Shih Tzu puppy left her home alone for her afternoon walk through the park and back. It was the middle of summer and the heat was scorching! Her owner, Miss Millie, liked to call this time of year the "Dog Days of Summer."

"Dog Days of Summer?" thought Suzy. What on earth does that mean? Oh, well. No matter. Nothing was going to keep little Suzy from her daily walk. So, she bounced down the steps and ran down the sidewalk! But she stopped suddenly when she realized something. "Whoa! It's really hot out today!" A few houses down, Suzy found her friend Dash the Black Lab lying on his back in the grass. Dash was the fastest dog in the neighborhood and usually racing the mailman and other cars along the sidewalk. But not today.

"Hey," Dash said when he saw Suzy. "Hot enough for ya? It sure feels like the Dog Days of Summer!"

There was that phrase again! "What does that mean, Dash?" Suzy asked politely. *"The Dog Days of Summer?"*

Dash said, "You don't know? It means when it gets this hot, they give out free ice cream to dogs down at Chilly Lil's Frozen Treats."

Well, Suzy's little ears perked right up! *"Free ice cream? I'm so there!"* she thought to herself. The little pup rocketed down the sidewalk toward the park and headed for Chilly Lil's.

But by the time she got there, Suzy was running out of steam and panting heavily. Whew! She was just a little shih tzu, after all. But even this heat was worth it for some free ice cream! However, she soon realized that they weren't giving out free ice cream to dogs at Chilly Lil's. There was even a sign on the door that said NO DOGS ALLOWED. And when Suzy tried to scoot inside behind a couple of kids, she got chased out by Lil herself! Well, that was harsh.

Suzy's friend Beatrice the Bernese Mountain Dog loped along, trying to find a patch of shade to lie in to beat the heat. "Hi, Bea," Suzy said. "Don't go looking for free ice cream at Chilly Lil's today. It's not gonna happen!"

"Oh!" Beatrice replied. "Some ice cream would have been heavenly during these Dog Days of Summer!"

There it was again: The Dog Days of Summer! "What does that mean, Beatrice? *The Dog Days of Summer?*" asked Suzy.

"That means when it gets this hot, they let dogs swim in the memorial fountain outside of City Hall."

Ahhhh! Suzy imagined herself swimming through the waters of the memorial fountain. In her mind, she did the breast stroke, the back stroke and the doggy paddle!

But when Suzy got down to the City Square and found the public fountain, there were no dogs swimming in it. In fact, she found a couple of police officers making sure nobody got any bright ideas about jumping in the memorial fountain to cool off!

Suzy decided to head down to the park like normal and then make her way back home. There were no kids playing on the playground due to the heat. No teams played on the baseball or soccer fields, either. No dogs played fetch or caught Frisbees in the field. But Gordon was there. Suzy's Golden Retriever pal worked as an assistance dog for his visually impaired owner. Gordon was taking a break from his duties.

"Gordon, you're the smartest dog I know," Suzy greeted him. "Can you tell me what the *Dog Days of Summer* are?"

"Well, these are the Dog Days of Summer," Gordon answered. "Some days it gets so hot that Mr. Jennings at the farmer's market gives cold slices of watermelon to all the dogs who visit. That's why they call them the Dog Days of Summer."

Well, Gordon was certainly a smart dog, but guess what: when Suzy got to the farmer's market, eyeing the stacks of watermelons, cantaloupes, oranges and peaches, Mr. Jennings grabbed his broom and shooed her away! There were no watermelon slices for any dog that day, even Suzy.

With all this running around trying to cool off and figure out what "*Dog Days of Summer*" meant, Suzy now found herself trudging back home as the sun set for the evening. Though the sinking sun gave a small bit of relief from the day's heat, it was still awfully hot outside.

As she dragged herself to her front door, Suzy found the neighbor cat Bootsie lounging on the front porch step. "Oh! Hey there, Bootsie. How are you holding up in this heat?" Suzy asked the black and white cat.

"It's a scorcher," Bootsie said. "What's got you out on a day like this?"

Suzy said, "I'm been trying to find out what the Dog Days of Summer are! Everyone keeps talking about them but nobody seems to know what they are!"

"Hmmm. Did you ask Dash the Black Lab?"

"Yep. He said the Dog Days of Summer meant free ice cream for dogs! But I checked and that didn't happen."

"Hmmm. Did you ask Beatrice the Bernese Mountain Dog?"

"Yep," Suzy replied. "She said the Dog Days of Summer are for dogs swimming in the memorial fountain in the City Square! But that wasn't allowed."

"Hmmm," Bootsie purred. "Did you ask Gordon the Golden Retriever?"

"Yep," said Suzy. "He said the Dog Days of Summer meant dogs get free watermelon slices at the farmer's market. But that theory only got kicked out by Mr. Jennings!"

"Most interesting," Bootsie said. "I see the problem. Looks like you didn't ask the right friend to tell you about the Dog Days of Summer."

"And who is that?" Suzy asked.

"Me!" replied the cat.

By now the sky had grown quite dark. As much as Suzy wanted to go inside in her cool air-conditioned home, she also wanted to know the truth about these Dog Days of Summer.

"Look up," Bootsie told Suzy. "See that super bright star up there? That's called 'Sirius,' or the 'Dog Star.' Ancient humans called this time during the summer the 'dog days' because that's when the Dog Star would rise just before the sun. It had nothing to do with how hot it was."

"Whoa," said Suzy, still looking up. "That's crazy. The Dog Star, huh?"

"Over time," Bootsie continued, "people forgot about this. Today we want to think the Dog Days of Summer have something to do with how hot it is, and that dogs just lay around because of the heat. But it really started thousands of years ago, when humans would study the stars and plan their lives around them!"

Suzy was still staring at the stars when the front door opened, and Miss Millie stepped out.

“There you are!” Miss Millie exclaimed! “I’ve been looking all over for you. It’s dinner and bed for you, pup. Come in and cool off. I can’t believe you stayed out all afternoon and evening during the Dog Days of Summer!” Miss Millie said. As Suzy passed Bootsie, the two pets winked knowingly at each other.

After dinner and getting cleaned up, Suzy lay in her comfy pet bed and enjoyed the cool air of the evening. “*Who would believe it took a cat to teach me the true meaning of the Dog Days of Summer?*” she thought to herself, smiling. Exhausted and content with her new knowledge, Suzy drifted off to sleep, dreaming of the fun summer adventures tomorrow would bring.



THE END

