

Hachiko

by Nicole Irving

(Adapted book. Beginner level)

CHAPTER 1

Puppy Days

"Come and see," the farmer called to his family. "There are eight puppies, and they're all well." His children quickly found their shoes and warm coats, and went out with him. How exciting! They ran through the cold yard to the little shed behind the house.

It was a winter night when the eight little dogs were born, and because the farmer's home was in Akita, in the north of Japan, there was a lot of snow. But the puppies were warm in the shed, next to their mother.

The farmer put his hand on the mother dog's beautiful yellow-white coat.

"You did well," he said. "You must sleep now."

The children watched their father, and they smiled. Akita was famous for these big dogs, and their father loved them.

Soon, the farmer's wife came and looked, too. "They're beautiful puppies," she smiled.

"Yes," the farmer said. "My friend in Tokyo, Professor Ueno, is going to be happy. He's waiting for a nice Akita puppy, and he's going to pay us thirty yen. He can have the best one."

"Oh, yes," his wife said. "Professor Ueno must have the best puppy for his thirty yen" She smiled at the children. "Now come and eat. Dinner's ready."

For the next two weeks, the puppies drank their mother's milk and slept. Then they began opening their eyes, and they wanted to chew everything. They chewed their mother's ears and coat, and they chewed their bed, too!

After one more week, the puppies began to walk. Everyone laughed when they watched the little dogs, because they could not walk well. Then, two or three weeks later, when the puppies were bigger and could walk better, they began to play. They played a lot, and the children loved playing with them.

Once, when the puppies were about six weeks old, three of them began playing by the shed door. When the farmer came in with food and water for the mother dog, the three puppies ran through the open door into the yard. The farmer did not see them, and they began to play in the snow. They played and played, but soon they were very cold. There was snow on their coats and on their paws, and the puppies got colder and colder. Soon, they could not move.

In the house, the family heard the mother dog. She never usually made a noise, but now she barked and barked from her bed. The children ran out to the shed.

"Why are you barking?" the little girl asked.

Then her brother looked at the puppies and said, "Where are all your puppies? There are only five here!"

The children went into the yard, and soon they found the three puppies in the snow. They called to their father.

"Oh, dear," the farmer said when he saw the cold little dogs. "Bring them into the house quickly. It's warm in there."

The children brought the puppies into the house. Two of the little dogs sat and cried. But one of them was interested in everything, and he did not sit down or cry.

"Look at this puppy!" said the farmer. "He's braver than his brother and sister! He's a very nice Akita dog - let's give him to Professor Ueno."

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Soon, the puppies were bigger, and they needed to leave their mother and go to their new homes. So one day, the farmer went to the train station with the professor's puppy in a box, and spoke to the driver of the Tokyo train.

"My friend Professor Ueno lives in Tokyo," he said, "and this puppy is for him. The professor is going to meet the train at Shibuya Station."

The driver carefully took the box and put it in the train. At first, the little puppy cried, but the driver opened the box, put his hand on the dog's head and said, "It's OK, little puppy. You're going to your new home." Then the dog slept.

After many hours, the train arrived at Shibuya Station in Tokyo, near the professor's house.

"Thank you," said Professor Ueno when he took the box from the train driver. He looked at the dog's yellow-white face and dark eyes. "Oh, he's beautiful," the professor smiled.

"Yes, he is," said the train driver. "You've got a nice dog there, Professor."

CHAPTER 2

A New Home

I was only five years old when I first met Hachiko. Professor Ueno often came after work and drank green tea at my parents' yakitori stall near the station. So when he left the station with his new puppy that day in 1923, he stopped and said hello to my parents and me. My parents often took me to the stall with them, so I knew Professor Ueno, and I liked him.

I remember that day well. The professor put the box on a stool and said to me, "Have a look, Nobu."

I looked into the box.

"It's a puppy!" I cried.

The professor took the dog out of the box, and I put my hand on its warm coat.

"What a beautiful dog, Professor!" my mother said.

Professor Ueno smiled. "Yes - and he's brave, too, I think. There are a lot of different noises here in Tokyo, but he isn't afraid." The professor put the little dog back in its box. "I'm going to take him back to my house now, but we can come and see you again soon, Nobu."

The professor carried his new dog home, and when they arrived in the professor's yard, the puppy slowly, carefully came out of his box. He was afraid at first. But he was hungry and thirsty, so soon he ate some rice with fish, and drank some water.

Then he began playing, and the professor watched him. The puppy was quick and strong. He ran and looked in the yard, and wanted to play with everything. When the little dog got tired, the professor sat on a chair with him, and the puppy soon went to sleep. So when Mrs Ueno came home from the shops that day, she walked into the yard and found her husband with the puppy in his arms.

"Meet our little Akita puppy," her husband said.

The dog opened his dark eyes and wagged his tail happily.

"Hello!" said Mrs Ueno, and she smiled at the puppy's little face. "Oh, you are beautiful. We're going to love you!"

"What are we going to call him?" the professor said to his wife.

They gave the little dog the name Hachiko. Hachi means eight in Japanese, and the dog's mother had eight puppies. In Japan, eight is a good number, too.

The professor made a warm bed for the puppy in a yard shed near the house, and Hachiko slept quietly there that night.

Professor Ueno worked at the University of Tokyo, and the next day, when he went to work, Hachiko stayed at home in the yard. He played there happily. Then he found a shoe near the front door of the house, and he took it to his bed and chewed it.

"Stop, and give me that shoe," Mrs Ueno said when she came into the yard. "You bad dog! That's one of the professor's shoes! He's going to be very angry."

But Professor Ueno laughed when his wife told him about the shoe. "He can have those shoes," he said. "They're very old, and I only wore them in the yard."

Mrs Ueno looked at him. "But you loved those shoes!" she said. "You need to be angry with him when he's bad, or he's never going to learn."

The next day, it was sunny, and Professor Ueno played with Hachiko after breakfast. "You must be good today," he said to the puppy. "Don't chew things - only my old shoes." And the professor put the two old shoes next to the puppy's bed. "Now I must go to work."

Later that morning, Mrs Ueno put some clothes on the washing line in the yard. The puppy was tired, and he went to sleep in the sun.

"I'm sorry, Hachiko," Mrs Ueno said. "I was angry with you yesterday, but you're a good puppy." She went shopping, and left Hachiko in the yard.

After Mrs Ueno left, Hachiko opened his eyes and looked at the washing line. The clothes on the line moved in the wind, and he watched them. They moved again. How exciting! Hachiko wanted to see better so he went nearer. There was a chair under the line, and he jumped onto it, and took a white shirt in his teeth. He took a second shirt, and then a third, and soon the clothes were all over the yard! Hachiko ran and played with them.

"Oh, no!" Mrs Ueno said angrily when she came home. "You bad dog... look at the professor's shirts!"

When Professor Ueno came home, Mrs Ueno told her husband about the clothes. "He wants to play with everything," she said. "I can't watch him all the time."

"I'm sorry about the clothes," the professor said. "He's young and excited. But he learns fast, and I'm going to teach him. Look, he understands. He's watching you, but his ears and tail are down."

Mrs Ueno looked at Hachiko. "Well, you must learn to be good soon, Hachiko," she said, "or you can't stay here."

CHAPTER 3

Learning to Be Good

"OK, Hachiko," the professor said to the puppy the next day. "You need to be a good dog. Mrs Ueno is going to like you, I know it, but you must learn quickly."

So the professor began teaching his puppy every day. Stop! Sit! Go! Come! Bring it to me! No, that's not good, the professor told the dog, and Hachiko watched, listened, and learned. The professor took him for a lot of walks in the streets near their home. Soon, Hachiko walked well with his master. He stopped and waited with him when there were bicycles or cars. And he came quickly when his master called him.

When he went past the little food stalls near Shibuya Station, he walked next to his master and never took food, so people did not get angry with him.

Often, the professor brought Hachiko to my parents' stall. He always sat quietly by the professor's feet, and I patted his head and sat with him.

"He likes you, Nobu," the professor said.

I loved it when the professor came. He was our friend, and Hachiko was our friend, too.

Spring came, and there were flowers on the cherry trees. People came out because they wanted to see the flowers, and the professor and his beautiful dog walked happily with them. Hachiko was big and strong now, and everyone liked him.

Sometimes, Professor Ueno needed to work away from Tokyo. One day, when Hachiko was only four months old, the professor was away when a typhoon - a very big storm - came to Japan.

Professor Ueno could not come home, and Mrs Ueno was afraid. She did not like typhoons, and that night, the storm was very bad. She thought of Hachiko in his shed, in the wind and rain. At about midnight, she went and called him into the house. He came in and stayed near her, and all night, he was good, and very quiet. With Hachiko near her, Mrs Ueno was not afraid.

"You're a good dog, Hachiko," Mrs Ueno said.

CHAPTER 4

A Faithful Dog

Every weekday, Professor Ueno took the train to work, so in the morning he walked from his house to Shibuya Station. But before he left home, he always played with Hachiko in the yard, and then said goodbye to him. Some mornings, Mrs Ueno came to the door and watched, and said, "Remember your train!"

"Goodbye," the professor laughed then. "Have a good day, Hachiko. Be good! Don't jump and play with the clothes on the washing line!" And he went into the street, closed the yard gate with a smile, and walked to the station.

One morning, when the professor left home, Hachiko suddenly jumped over the gate and ran down the little street. Professor Ueno heard a noise behind him, and when he looked, there was Hachiko!

"Go home, Hachiko!" the professor told the dog. "Go home now!"

But Hachiko did not want to go home, and he sat down.

"I'm going to work, Hachiko - you can't come with me," said the professor, and he began walking down the street. But the dog got up and walked behind him.

The professor laughed. "So you want to come to the station with me? All right, I understand. But then you must go home."

Half an hour later, at the house, Mrs Ueno looked for Hachiko. He was not in the yard, and he was not in the shed.

But then she saw Hachiko at the yard gate, on the street! He jumped over the gate and went to Mrs Ueno with his tail up.

"Where were you?" she asked. But he looked happy, so she patted him on the head and he went to sleep in the warm sun.

The next morning, Hachiko wanted to go with the professor again.

"No, Hachiko - stay!" the professor said when he shut the gate.

But after five minutes, he heard Hachiko behind him again. The professor looked at his dog and smiled. "Go home, Hachiko!" he said kindly.

But the dog did not go home. He walked with his master to Shibuya Station, and then he came home again.

After that, Hachiko went to the station every morning and in the evening, too! Every day at six o'clock, he jumped over the yard gate and went along the little streets to Shibuya Station. When Hachiko arrived there, he sat and waited

near the ticket office. He wagged his tail happily when he saw his master, and then walked home with him.

Soon, Hachiko had many friends at the station. When people saw him there every day, they smiled. "Look at the professor's faithful dog," they said.

* * *

The professor told us all about this when he came to our stall in the evenings. I loved to hear his stories about his special dog. One winter's day, there was a lot of snow in Tokyo. My parents did not open their stall that day. "No one is going to buy yakitori today," they said. But the next day, the weather was better, and that evening, Professor Ueno came and drank green tea at our stall with Hachiko.

"Hachiko is a very special dog, Nobu," the professor said to me that evening. "Yesterday morning, when I saw the snow, I said to him, 'Stay here, Hachiko! Go to your bed. It's cold today - don't come with me.'

"But Hachiko didn't want to stay - he walked to the station with me, and then went home. And yesterday evening, he walked to the station again and waited in the snow. When I arrived, his coat was white from the snow, and his paws were very cold! He came and slept in our house last night because he needed to get warm."

My father said to me later, "Professor Ueno's dog is special, Nobu, but his master is special, too. He's a good man - he's very kind to people and very kind to animals."

CHAPTER 5

Everything Changes

But one spring day, everything changed for Hachiko. That morning, like always, Professor Ueno walked to the station with his dog, and then patted his head, said goodbye, and went in. Hachiko walked home and jumped over the gate into the yard.

That day, the dog stayed near Mrs Ueno when she put the clothes on the washing line in the yard; and when she went into the house, he stayed near the door. It was a warm day, and Hachiko slept. But he listened to the noises from the house, too. That day was different - and Hachiko knew it.

Again and again that morning, he barked, and when Mrs Ueno heard him, she came into the yard. "There's nobody at the gate," she said. "Why are you barking?"

In the evening, Hachiko jumped over the gate, went to the station, and sat and waited for the professor. When the professor's usual train arrived and people walked out of the station, Hachiko stood and wagged his tail. But his master did not come. So he sat and waited again. More trains came into the station, and when they arrived, Hachiko stood and watched the people carefully. But he did not see his master. Hachiko waited and waited, and in the end, at about midnight, he walked home.

When he arrived, he jumped over the gate, went to the door of the house and barked. Mrs Ueno slowly came out into the dark yard. She put her hand on Hachiko's warm coat for a long time. Then she began to cry, and said, "Your master isn't coming home, Hachiko. Not tonight, not tomorrow. He's never coming back."

She went into the house, and she called the dog. "You can sleep in the house tonight, Hachiko," she said quietly. But Hachiko looked at her and did not move. He wanted to stay in the yard, so she said, "Goodnight, Hachiko," and closed the door.

* * *

When my father told me the news about Professor Ueno, he came and sat next to me, and took my hand.

"Professor Ueno had a bad heart," he told me. "He died suddenly at the university yesterday. It's very sad. Professor Ueno was a good man."

I cried a lot that day. I cried for the kind professor, and his wife, and I cried for Hachiko. I did not go to the yakitori stall that evening. I stayed at home with my mother. But when my father came home, I heard him. He told my mother, "I saw Hachiko this evening. He went to the station at five past six, and waited there for his master for hours and hours. When a train came in, he stood up and wagged his tail."

"Oh, poor Hachiko," my mother said.

I went and saw him before I left," my father told her.

I said, 'Go home, Hachiko. He isn't coming. I'm sorry.' But he didn't go home."

Every evening after that, when we were at our stall, we saw Hachiko. He arrived at the station at five past six. He sat and waited, and when a train arrived and people came out of the station, he stood and watched.

"It's very sad," people said when they saw him.

CHAPTER 6

A Sad Time

Every day that spring, Hachiko went to the station in the evening and waited for his master. One day, Mrs Ueno came to our stall and talked to my mother.

"I feel sad in our house now, without the professor," said Mrs Ueno. "It's a big house, too, so it's expensive. I'm going to sell it and go and live with my daughter."

"Is Hachiko going to go there with you?" my mother asked.

"No," Mrs Ueno said. "An Akita dog needs a yard, and my daughter doesn't have a yard at her house. But my old uncle does, and he wants to help. He likes Akitas, and he would like to have Hachiko."

Three weeks later, Mrs Ueno took Hachiko to her uncle's house. My father went and helped her. The uncle's house was two kilometers away, on a quiet Tokyo street. Mrs Ueno and my father walked there with Hachiko, and Hachiko's new master put the dog in the yard. The yard had a high wall, and Mrs Ueno said to my father, "Hachiko can't run to Shibuya Station from here. The wall is very high, and he doesn't know these streets."

But the next evening, Hachiko jumped over the wall, ran to Shibuya Station, and waited there. Mrs Ueno's uncle looked for Hachiko in the streets near his house, but he could not find the dog. Then the old man went to the station and saw Hachiko. He was sitting near the ticket office.

"Come on, Hachiko," Mrs Ueno's uncle said. "The professor isn't coming. We need to go home." He took Hachiko back to his house, but every evening for two or three weeks, Hachiko jumped over the high wall and went to the station. He wanted to go and wait there for his master, Professor Ueno.

People brought him back to the uncle's yard, or the uncle went and got him - but it was no good. Hachiko did not want a new master. So Hachiko began to live in the streets near Shibuya Station.

Akitas are big dogs and they need to eat a lot of food every day, so Hachiko began coming to the back of the food stalls. Here he could sometimes find some fish or meat, or some rice - but often there was nothing for him, and some nights, Hachiko was very hungry. My parents gave him water, and sometimes some food. But they had a baby now, my sister Keiko, and they did not have a lot of money, so they could not always help Hachiko.

We always liked to see Hachiko, but not everyone was kind to him. One of the men from the food stalls did not like him, and he always chased him away.

"Go away, you dirty dog!" he said, and Hachiko put his tail down and ran. Some boys liked to throw stones at Hachiko, too, when he sat near the ticket office at the station.

Hachiko waited at the station for many hours every evening. He watched carefully when people walked out of the station. Some people came home through Shibuya Station every day. They wanted to go home quickly, and most of them did not look at the big dog. But some people liked to see him, and always stopped and patted his head. They knew his story from the people at the food stalls.

Late at night, Hachiko slept next to one of the buildings near the station. His big coat was warm, but on winter nights, people saw him in the cold and felt sad for him.

CHAPTER 6

Famous

Years went past. When I got older, I did not see Hachiko every day. Keiko and I were at school, and in the evening we often had school work. But when I helped my father at the yakitori stall, I always looked for Hachiko, and took him some food when I could.

One evening, when Hachiko was by the ticket office, a man came and looked at him carefully, and talked to him. "So you are Professor Ueno's dog, Hachiko. I heard about you, and I came and watched you yesterday, and again today. It's true, you wait here every evening! You're the most faithful dog in Japan!" The man patted Hachiko's head, and Hachiko slowly wagged his tail.

Then the man went and talked to the ticket officers, and to many people in the busy little streets near the station. He asked questions and listened carefully. He took a little book out of his pocket and wrote in it.

He came to our stall, too. He told us, "My name is Mr Saito, and I was one of Professor Ueno's students some years ago. I heard about the professor's dog, Hachiko, and I wanted to see him. He's a wonderful dog, and I want to write about him for a newspaper. I would like to tell Hachiko's story. Can I ask you some questions?"

We talked to Mr Saito for a long time. Three weeks later, there was a story about Hachiko in the Asahi Shimbun, one of the biggest newspapers in Japan. Next to the story there was a photo of Hachiko, and under the photo it said "Japan's most faithful dog."

After this, Hachiko was famous! It was exciting for everyone near Shibuya Station, and people went there every day because they wanted to see Hachiko, Japan's most faithful dog. Professor Ueno's wife lived with her old mother now, far from Tokyo, but she read the story in the newspaper, and she was happy, because she often thought about Hachiko. "He always wanted to be at the station," she said to her mother. "He wants to wait for the professor. He's a wonderful dog."

People were kinder to Hachiko now. A lot of people came and visited him, and they sometimes brought food, and stopped and patted his head. When the man from the food stall chased Hachiko away, or when the boys began to throw stones, people stopped them. "Don't do that!" they said. "Hachiko is Japan's most faithful dog. You must be kind to him."

* * *

One day, about two years after the Asahi Shimbun story, my mother said to me and my sister, "Come to the stall after school today, Nobu and Keiko. There's going to be a party for Hachiko at Shibuya Station."

A party?" we said. "Why is Hachiko having a party?"

But my mother smiled and said, "Wait and see."

When we went with our mother to the station that day, there were many people there for Hachiko's party. There were men with cameras from the newspapers, workers from the station, and many people from the Shibuya stalls. Some of Hachiko's friends from the evening trains came, and some of Professor Ueno's family were there, too.

We could not see Hachiko at first. But when we found him, we understood the party. Hachiko was sitting next to a new statue. It was a statue of a dog - a statue of Hachiko - and it was in front of the ticket office.

Look!" said Keiko. "Now, when Hachiko comes to the station every day, he can sit and wait for his master next to the statue!"

After that wonderful party and all the different newspaper stories about him, Hachiko became more and more famous. The statue and the party brought happier times for him. He was never hungry now, and nobody threw stones at him, but he did not forget his master: he waited at the station every day.

* * *

Hachiko was an old dog now. When Keiko and I went and visited him at the station in the evenings, he was often asleep. Sometimes we brought nice food for him. He opened his eyes then, and stood up slowly, wagged his tail, and ate the food. But he was very old, and very tired.

One evening in 1935, our father came home early, and quietly said to my mother, Keiko, and me: "Come and sit with me. I must tell you something. I'm sorry, but Hachiko died today. I found him in a little street near the station. It's very sad."

My little sister Keiko cried then, and my mother took her hand. "He lived a long time," she told Keiko, "and he had some happy times..."

"And he was free, Keiko," I said.

My father looked at me, and he said, "You're right, Nobu. He was free. He wanted to wait for his master, and he did that every day. He was a very special dog. And everyone can remember him when they see his statue."

And it's true - nobody forgets Hachiko, because he was Japan's most faithful dog. He never stopped loving his master. Now, years later, when I am near Shibuya Station, I visit Hachiko's statue, and there are always many people there. Faithful friends meet at the statue and remember a very faithful dog.

Afterword

Hachiko died in March 1935, when he was eleven years old. His story is very, very famous in Japan and in many countries. In 1987, there was a Japanese film about him called Hachiko Monogatari, and in 2009, there was an American film with Richard Gere called Hachi: A Dog's Tale.

After Mr Saito wrote about Hachiko in the Asahi Shimbun, a friend of Mr Saito, called Teru Ando, made the first statue of the dog at Shibuya Station. Later, Teru Ando's son, Takeshi Ando, made a new statue - and you can see this statue at Shibuya Station today.

There are more statues of Hachiko, too. There is one in front of Odate Station, in Akita, the home of Akita dogs. And eighty years after Hachiko died, people put a wonderful statue in the gardens of the University of Tokyo. This statue is of Hachiko with Professor Ueno: the dog with his master again, after all those years.

- THE END -

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