

My Best Ever Belly Rubs

written by Bentley

Let me tell you about my day. My name is Bentley - a happy, healthy, 12 pound, 18-month old black and white Parti Pomeranian. I get lots of exercise every day on my ½ mile walk and chasing golf balls my Dad throws to me out on the golf course. I swim five times a day and run up and down 18 stairs about 20 times daily. Needless to say I have the nickname of “Buff Puppy”. I even have a great big pile of puppy toys. Life is good. I thought Friday was going to be a great day but it was ruff.

Typically, my day starts when the music box thing next to the bed starts talking but today was different. I woke up early and was just lying on my back at the foot of the bed with all my legs pointing to the ceiling and my tongue hanging limp out of the side of my snout just thinking what mischief I can get into today. I must have fallen back asleep because we all slept in, waking to the sound of the noisy grass eater wandering around the golf course below our sleeping room. I thought it was strange, but no growling from me when I can catch up on my napping.

Well, I hopped off the bed making a perfect 4-paw landing any Olympic judge would have scored a 10 followed by a couple tail-chasing circles, then scampered to the front door so I could, well - you know what. It was a cool sunny morning just perfect for my walk, but I couldn't wait to get back in the house for my three juicy carrots and a chicken dumbbell treat breakfast. I walked past where my kibble dish should have been but it wasn't there. Hmmm - that was odd, but OK, and off I go to get my carrots. Mom kept walking back and forth and seemed to be avoiding the refrigerator holding the crunchy morsels. What going on – she knows the routine. Do I need to start groaning to remind her? Some 20 groans later, a few yelps and a lot of pacing, I still wasn't getting the message across. What's going on this morning? “Yuck!”

Believe it or not, I hate riding in the car. I used to throw up when I was littler and just never seemed to forget it, so I shake like an old Chihuahua whenever I get in a car. None of that ears flapping / wind in the face stuff for me – give me a soft couch, a bowl of treats, and the remote control and I'm set. So, here I am starving and then the words I love to hear “Come on Bentley, let's go!” reach my ears. Great - I'm figuring this means we're going for my walk and breakfast will be later, but was I wrong. I can still hear those words “Let's go for a ride in the car.” I'm thinking “no way” but both Mom and Dad were heading to the garage door so I assumed my “if I lay as flat on the floor as possible maybe they won't see me” pose. Well – that didn't work and Mom picks me up and carries me to the car that Dad had been cooling off in the garage. This is not looking good. In my mind, car ride equals trouble. I can handle one-on-one but both with me today means I'm probably not going to like what's coming. As the car backs out of the garage, Dad said something to Mom like “we're taking the Bentley to get tutored” or something like that. I didn't know what that meant but they giggled and that made me feel a little better.

As Dad drove, Mom tried to calm me down by trying to pet me but I kept just inches away in the back seat just in case I had to make a run for it. We seemed to be traveling in a different direction than usual, so I sort of started to stop shaking and felt that just maybe this trip might be OK. Within a few minutes, I found out how wrong I was. As we pulled in to a parking lot I could smell lots of dog and cat smells and that can mean only one thing - veterinarian. My worse fear has come true. Dad picked me up gently and gave me a kiss and a hug and tried to reassure

me but I wasn't buying it. I didn't know what was to happen, but my dog friends told me stories of their trips to the vet and now I was shaking helplessly and I just couldn't stop.

We entered the vet's office and it seemed nice – well as nice as a torture chamber can be. Friendly people and racks of dog food – maybe this was a trendy Scottsdale dog restaurant. After a short wait and some chit-chat, a lady led us into a room with a couch and TV, but off in the corner was the dreaded “exam table”. Let's see – if I jump down now, I can shoot out the door before it closes and make a run for it. Shucks – the door closed – I'm trapped. Mom put me on the table and kept saying “It's OK Bentley – settle down puppy dog”. Did she really believe that I would fall for that garbage she was telling me? The nurse lady petted me, started looking around my butt, and then slid something cold “up there”. I looked at her enough to say “hey - we haven't even been properly introduced”. By now I was really shaking and started to pee on the table. Mom picked me up and I gave her a good soaking too as I was clawing my way on to her shoulders and back of her neck. Dad grabbed and held and tried to comfort me once again me on the couch – “whew - relief for now”.

Suddenly, the door opens and a tall man in a white coat walks in the room. Everyone calls him Doc but he didn't look like one of the Seven Dwarfs that I've ever seen. He was the VET – feared by all pets far and wide. I was shaking so much I could have been mistaken for a paint mixer. Up on the table I went and the Doc started poking and prodding while they were talking about stuff I had no idea about. Then Dad said “can you give him the shot now to calm him down?” I'm thinking “whose side is he on?” – he was supposed to protect me from stuff I don't like, not ask for it. Needless to say, I made a mental note of his comment and started thinking about what to chew up of his when we get home. The Doc was obliging and within seconds I felt a sharp jab in my hind quarter. Boy was he quick – I didn't even see that one coming. Whatever was in that thing he stuck me with, it sure calmed me down. I mellowed out in a matter of a few minutes to the point I was considering not biting him for that little sneak attack as I originally planned.

The Doc then asked if we wanted to see his place so we all wandered around his evil laboratory, Mom carrying me and the nurse ladies saying “Ooooooooh - what a cute puppy!” (like I haven't heard that a hundred time before). There were all kinds of equipment and shiny tables and lights. My glassy eyes now fixed on a wall of pet hotels – those low budget steel rooms with bars for doors and no TV. I heard the Doc say they were heated so I'm thinking “why would we want them heated – its 110 degrees outside and I'm wearing a fur coat?” I guess the Doc was absent that day in vet school when they were teaching about creature comforts. I was feeling even more relaxed and sleepy by now so I really didn't pay much attention to the rest of the tour or that Mom and Dad had left the room. I think they both kissed and hugged me but I was too sleepy to tell. The nurses put me in one of the pet hotel rooms and slammed the door shut. Momentarily, I sobered up enough to realize I was trapped and Mom and Dad were gone. I was all alone, sad, and helplessly sleepy. Unexpectedly, a nurse opened my door and gave me my favorite little gray stuffed bull chew toy complete with squeaker and horns. I saw Dad put it in the car before we left. It was good to see a familiar face even if I had pulled all the stuffing out of his head through a little hole I chewed in his head. He didn't seem to mind because we play together most every day. Maybe this was all a bad dream but I was a little scared of what was to happen next.

I don't know how long I was in the hotel because I fell asleep. It's been a ruff morning and no TV in the room, what else could I do. I woke to the loud clank of a nurse opening the door on my cell. She lifted me up and snuggled me as she walked and talked to me and others in the room. It must have been the tour still going on but I think we already saw this room with the lights and shiny tables. I was still so sleepy I just wanted to lie down and as if the nurse could read my mind, she laid me on my back down on a soft warm blanket on the table in the center of the room. Hey – this place it pretty nice – it must have been time for my belly rubs. Thank goodness I wasn't modest laying there “au natural”. There were a bunch of people standing around me but they all had masks on. I guess we were going to play a game of Guess Who Is Behind the Mask or something like that. “Ouch – that hurt!” I thought as something stung me in the leg – maybe a bee or something. I'll need to speak to the manager about that after my belly rubs. A voice from behind one of the masks said to me “Bentley, we need you to bark backwards from 100. Can you do that for us?” I was thinking no problem, and I started “Bark, bark, ba.”

(Sometime later) My eyes were barely open but I could make out the bars of my pet hotel room door only inches from my nose. The warm soft blanket I was lying on was bunched up in the corner like a pillow under my head. What happened? I must have really dozed off. The nurse kept repeating “Bentley – wake up honey. Bentley? Can you wake up for me?” The door opened and the nurse started rubbing my neck and shoulders. I felt so relaxed that I wanted this feeling to last just a little while longer. That belly rub was the best I've ever had. I need to tell all my dog friends about this place. Having goofed off long enough today, I figured I should wake up and get on with my day, so I opened my eyes and gave the nurse a big smile and made my ears stand up. People seem to like this gesture for reasons I can't explain. I guess this is what she wanted because she picked me up and carried me around the room for a few minutes over her shoulder. From that position, I could see another two dogs and three cats sleeping in late this morning too. Why hadn't I heard of this place before – nice private rooms, belly rubs, sleep in late, and you get carried everywhere? She laid me down on a blanket on a table and I thought “more belly rubs?” I won't have any fur left on my belly if this keeps up. The Doc and the nurse were checking between my legs and then talking about healing. Why would they be talking about heeling now – had I enrolled in some kind of obedience class while I was sleeping? Everything must have been OK because I got to lie down in my room again which was just fine with me. My legs were like rubber so standing up was tough. Best not fight it and just do what I do best - lie down.

A few hours past and the nurse kept fussing over me and taking me out to stretch my legs and get a little water to drink. I was so hungry since I hadn't eaten since last night. No one had the courtesy to have provided me a menu yet so I just gobbled up some meaty pieces left on my pillow in my room. They took me outside to “do my business” and how embarrassed I was when I must have miscalculated my center of gravity and about fell over. How could this be? Nothing has changed and I've been practicing this maneuver forever. Also – I felt a little tug and ache “down there” but the feeling soon went away. What a weird day I'm having.

After watching the activity in the room interrupted by a few more naps, I started to wonder where Mom and Dad were. It was sure nice they brought me to this fancy hotel for me to relax,

but now it was time for me to go home. I started pacing back and forth, and then I took my empty water dish in my mouth and started dragging it back and forth across the bars on the door just like in the old prison movies. The startled nurse came over and said they had called my Mom and Dad to pick me up. That was just what I wanted to hear and a few minutes later, in walks Dad and Mom. They were smiling and so was I while wagging my tail frantically. They hugged and kissed me so much and despite the rest of me still being sleepy and weak, my tongue was delivering all the sloppy wet dog kisses I could. After what seemed to be an eternity of yakking back in forth with the nurses, we were on our way back home. The near rock star treatment continued once we got home because they carried me everywhere. I must have trained them well because they knew my first destination was the nearest bush, then straight to the refrigerator for a couple of juicy carrots and some nice warm baked chicken. That small meal rapidly became a faint memory as I waddled slowly over to one of my favorite spots on the soft rug on the shady side of the couch. I laid there briefly before drifting off to a well-deserved nap thinking this day turned out OK but for some reason I had the feeling that something is missing.