

"*Summer holidays!*" Emily sang the words out loud. She'd left her house a few minutes earlier and was now biking along Dallas Road with the sea to her right, Beacon Hill to her left, the wind at her back, and a fine morning stretching ahead.

She swerved to avoid a pothole, narrowly missed another and, ringing her bicycle bell, flew past a horse-drawn carriage to escape the dust and dried manure kicked up by the horses' hooves. Beyond the carriage, the road was clear and the air held nothing but the scent of wild roses and the salty tang of the sea.

She kept to the road until she came to a grassy field overlooking the strait. Ignoring the bumps, she rode straight across the field to the edge of the cliff and dismounted. She left her bicycle in a thicket of rose bushes and clambered down the steep path to the beach.

Two months of holidays! After the excitement of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, Emily was afraid that the summer might be boring. She was also saddened by the possibility that she and her best friend, Alice, might not be able to see each other until they went back to school in September.

But today Emily was optimistic. She had other good friends, like Hing's daughter, Mei Yuk, and George Walsh. She had her sisters, Jane and Amelia, and her bicycle, and as of this morning, she had a plan—to go places where she might see Alice by chance. They both had bicycles, and they liked the same places. It was such a simple and obvious plan that she couldn't imagine why she hadn't thought of it sooner.

When she reached the bottom of the path, she surveyed the empty beach with high hopes. If Alice *were* to show up on a beach, this would be the one. They'd spent hours here in the past, hunting for treasures, building forts out of driftwood, splashing in the cold water, paddling on logs. George had often joined them, along with Alice's brother, Tom.

Emily grimaced at the thought of Tom. He'd always been a bit of a rascal, but not the bully he was now—picking on Mei Yuk and her brothers, sneering at Emily, making rude comments. Thank goodness *he* wasn't on the beach. Her morning would've been ruined if he had been.

She sat on a log and opened her sketchbook, pleased that she'd brought it along. She needed the practice. Besides, sketching on a beach was the very thing that Emily Carr, her art teacher, liked to do.

Pencil poised, she looked about for something to draw. Sandpipers running along the shore? The rocky outcrop? The steamship crossing the strait, with the mountains in the background? She'd sketched the mountains many times before, but why not? The ship would be a challenge. Recalling Miss Carr's words about shape and form, she began.

Several sketches later, and with still no sign of Alice, Emily closed her sketchbook and set off to do some beachcombing. She was strolling along, pausing now and then to pocket a smooth stone or a seashell, when she

saw a mob of crows and seagulls swooping over something on the beach. From a distance, it looked like a bundle of dark clothing. But as she got closer, she saw that it was a dog.

A dead dog.

Her heart gave a turn. How long had the poor thing been lying there? His fur was still wet. Had the tide washed him in? Had he made it to shore on his own, only to give up at the end?

He'd been a fine-looking dog—medium in size, black with a white chest and muzzle, tan markings on his paws, a long tail, and pointed ears. But he was so thin! His ribs—

“Oh!” Emily started, wide-eyed with shock. The dog's chest was moving. His tail twitched. A tremor passed through his body. “You're alive!” Emily gasped. “It's a miracle!”

The dog made a horrible retching sound and struggled to his feet. Shaking uncontrollably, he heaved up buckets of seawater until finally, spent and exhausted, he collapsed again.

“Don't give up now!” Emily cried in alarm.

He whimpered at the sound of her voice and made a feeble attempt to wag his tail. Another tremor passed through him.

Emily leaned over and felt his side. In spite of the sunshine, he was freezing. And no wonder—the waters in the strait never warmed up, not even in the summer.

She took off her pinafore, wrapped it around the dog, and began to rub him down. “You must be a strong swimmer,” she said. “As strong as Samson in the Bible story, only Samson wasn't a dog. I think that's what I'll call you. Samson, but Sam for short. Do you like that name?”

The dog gave another whimper, more like a sigh. He was still shivering.

“There, there, Sam,” Emily murmured. “I'll take care of you.”

First, she had to get him home. The nearest path to the top of the cliffs was only a few yards away. It was longer than the path she'd come down on, but since it wasn't as steep, she knew it would be an easier climb.

She picked Sam up and held him against her chest. He was as light as a rag doll but so cold that she too began to shiver.

But not for long! By the time she reached the road, she was drenched with sweat. With every step, Sam had grown heavier. Now he was starting to wheeze. “Easy, boy,” she soothed. “We're almost there ...”

*Almost?* Her house was still three long blocks away. She'd never make it. She'd have to stop somewhere and rest, or leave Sam and run home to get her mother.

Just then, she heard the Beacon Hill streetcar clang to a stop behind her. As luck would have it, a familiar Scottish voice called out, “Hello, Emily! Need a hand?”

She turned and saw her neighbour stepping off the platform. “Mr. Sinclair! Am I glad to see you!”

He caught up to her and gently lifted Sam into his arms. “You're about done in, lass,” he said. “You *and* the dog.”

“Isn’t he beautiful? I’m calling him Sam. I found him on the beach.” She let Mr. Sinclair carry Sam until they reached her house, then insisted she could manage on her own. “I can’t wait to show everyone,” she said, and thanked him again.

Her sisters had spotted her from an upstairs window and came running outside, shrieking with delight.

“A dog! Emily’s got a dog!”

“Where did you get him? Why’s he shivering?”

“Mother, hurry! Emily’s got a dog!”

“How come you’re carrying him?”

“What’s his name?”

“His name’s Sam,” Emily told them. “And you have to speak quietly. You’re scaring him.”

Mother met them on the back verandah. “Oh, Emily. Look at you. And this poor creature ...”

“I’m calling him Sam.”

“Well, Sam needs some attention and you need dry clothes. Away you go—and mind you have a good wash.”

Emily reluctantly left Sam in the kitchen and did as she was told. A short time later, she came back and found him lying by the wood stove, wrapped in warm blankets and sleeping soundly.

Jane and Amelia were watching over him. “He drank some water,” Jane reported. “And a bit of beef broth.”

“Mother told us to pat him, to move his blood,” said Amelia.

Emily smiled. “Doesn’t he look contented? At first, I thought he was dead. But then he came to life before my very eyes.” She told them the story, then bent down and planted a kiss on Sam’s white muzzle. “I love him already.”

“I know, dear,” said Mother. “But don’t get your hopes up.”

“What? I can keep him, can’t I?”

“Not if he belongs to someone else. He may have been trying to get home, you know. In any case, we’ll see what your father has to say.”