A Triumph of Surgery – Summary

A Triumph of Surgery by James Herriot recounts the episode where the narrator, a veterinary surgeon, saves the life of a dog, Tricki, by hospitalising him to prevent him from being overfed by his wealthy owner, Mrs. Pumphrey, who was simply worsening his condition.

Summary

Dr. Herriot had pulled up his car when he saw Mrs. Pumphrey with her little dog on the street. The dog was very fat. He had blood-red and rheumy eyes. His tongue lolled from his jaws. Dr. Herriot was shocked to see his appearance.

Mrs. Pumphrey called Tricki (the little dog) as listless. He had no energy. So, she gave him extras between meals. But his health could not be built up. Even the malt, cod liver oil and bowl of Horlicks failed to make him sleepy.

Mrs. Pumphrey cut down on the sweet things but relented when Tricki started getting weaker. She gave him his favourite cream cakes and chocolates. She gave him food at odd and irregular hours. She gave him only little walks and no other exercise.

The doctor advised Mrs. Pumphrey to cut Tricki’s food right down and to give him more exercise. Mrs. Pumphrey got determined to adhere to the doctor’s stern advice. Dr. Herriot watched Tricki’s progress but was not satisfied. Soon after he left eating and kept vomiting and panting. The doctor suggested that Tricki should be kept under observation in the hospital.

Mrs. Pumphrey started wailing when Dr. Herriot took Tricki to his hospital. Everybody in her household, including her maids, were in tears.

Tricki could not even wag his tail or kick with his legs. His eyes too had become dull and he lay down motionless on the carpet. The other dogs at the surgery ignored him as an uninteresting object. The doctor gave him plenty of water. He became a bit energetic after two days. On the third day he trotted out and enjoyed the company of other dogs. He also started eating properly.

The doctor did not give Tricki any medicinal treatment. All day, he frolicked with other dogs cheerfully. He got out of danger and started convalescing rapidly.

Mrs. Pumphrey enquired about Tricki on phone many times a day. She was suffering from the pangs of his separation. Ultimately, she was told that Tricki had recovered. She reached the ‘surgery’ by car to collect him. The doctor brought Tricki in his arms. Tricki jumped into Mrs. Pumphrey’s lap and started licking her face. Tears were shining in her eyes. She thanked the doctor with trembling lips.