

A Triumph of Surgery

- Dr. James Herriot

The story narrates the episode where the narrator, A vet surgeon saves the live of a dull dog tricki. The dog is over fed by the wealthy owner Mrs. Pumphrey and then is hospitalised under the care of the surgeon the surgeon cures him without any surgery or medication.

Character Sketch

James Herriot: James is a vet surgeon who proves to be an capable doctor and wise individual he is an animal lover and a caring guardian.

Mrs. Pumphrey: Mrs. Pumphrey is a wealthy single women she is very much attached to her dog tricki she is very loving but weak at heart.

Tricki: Tricki is a lazy and fat dog who loves food very fond of his owner terms out to be energetic and lively after recovering from his illness.

1. Describe tricki in your own words. Why is tricki considered as a greedy fellow?

Answer: Tricki was a dog of a rich lady whose name was Mrs. Pumphrey. He was a hugely fat, like a bloated sausage with a leg at each corner. His eyes, bloodshot and rheumy, started straight ahead and his tongue lolled from his jaws. Tricki is considered as greedy dog because he had never been known to refuse food and he could tackle a meal at any hour of the day or night.

2. Write a short note on-

1. Tricki's farewell.

Answer: When Tricki was being taken to the hospital for the surgery the entire staff was roused, maids rushed in and out bringing all the items that Tricki used on a regular basis like his day bed, night bed, cushion, toys etc. and as Mr. Herriot turned the corner he saw everybody was in tears Mrs. Pumphrey gave a desperate cry, when Tricki was sent to surgery.

2. Tricki's stay and recovery at hospital.

Answer: When entered the hospital he looked down at other dogs. They sniffed around him and ignored it. Tricki was kept under observation by Mr. James Herriot for two days. Mr. Herriot gave him plenty of water but no food. On the third day, it started whimpering on seeing other dogs and began to interact with other dogs. Later that day other dogs had their food but Tricki was served only some food and later he started to show progress. He was not given any medicinal treatment. He started running with other dogs all day and he used to hunt rats in old hen-house at night. He discovered the joy of being with other dogs and he never had such a time in his life.

3. Mrs. Pumphrey's concern.

Answer: Mrs. Pumphrey was concerned about Tricki because he would not eat anything and spend all his time lying on the rug and panting. He refused to eat his favourite dishes and would bouts of vomiting and he did not want to go far walks or do anything at all. So Mrs. Pumphrey called Dr. James Herriot for his checkup and treatment and Mrs. Herriot took Tricki to hospital for his treatment but Mrs. Pumphrey was not ready to leave Tricki even for a single day but for Tricki's treatment Mr. Herriot

took Tricki to hospital with other dogs and Mrs. Pumphrey was really concerned for her pet. She would call Mr. Herriot almost dozen times a day to know his status. She would send many food items and drinks such as eggs, wine and brandy to help with his recovery. She used to ask whether Tricki's cushions were being turned regularly and if he wore correct coat according to the weather.

3. How did Mrs Pumphrey and her servant behave when Tricki was being taken to the surgery?

Answer: When Tricki was being taken to the surgery the entire staff was roused, maids rushed in and out bringing his day bed, night bed, cushion, toys. Everybody was in tears. Mrs. Pumphrey gave a desperate cry, when Tricki was sent to surgery.

4. Why is Mrs. Pumphrey responsible for tricki's condition? How do you know that tricki had an affluent life?

Answer: Mrs. Pumphrey was responsible for the dog's illness. She gave him little extra between meals i.e., malt, cod-liver oil, etc. He was not given any physical exercise. So, the dog fell ill and started vomiting also.

Tricki was a pampered pet of an affluent mistress. He had a wardrobe of tweed coats with separate coats for the cold and rainy weather. He had separate beds for day and night with lovely cushions, toys, rubber rings, breakfast bowl, supper bowl and lunch bowl. All these luxury items show that he had an affluent living.

5. Briefly describe Herriot's base of content or how lunch became a ceremonial occasion for Mr. Herriot and his partner?

Answer: Mrs. Pumphrey sent fresh eggs, two dozen at a time to build up Tricki's strength. Mr. Herriot and his partner began to take two eggs each in breakfast. They enjoyed it a lot. Then bottles of wine began to arrive to enrich Tricki's blood. This way it became a ceremonial occasion for them, to have two glasses of wine before and during the meal.

Think about it

1. What kind of a person do you think the narrator, a veterinary surgeon, is? Would you say he is tactful as well as full of common sense?

Answer: The narrator, a veterinary surgeon, is a capable and wise doctor. He handles Tricki properly which shows that he is sincere about his profession. He does not operate upon the dog unnecessarily and cures him by altering his diet and activities. He is a tactful person as he knew exactly how to convince Mrs Pumphrey to hospitalise Tricki for a surgery. His decision to inform Mrs Pumphrey to collect Tricki supports his sensibilities even though he was tempted to keep Tricki as a permanent guest.

2. Do you think Tricki was happy to go home? What do you think will happen now?

Answer: Tricki was happy to go back home as he really loved his mistress and the comfort of his lavish life. He didn't have any friends at home like in the hospital, but he seemed equally excited at the sight of Mrs Pumphrey. I think that Mrs Pumphrey will now be careful about Tricki's diet and health. She may also give him exercise daily as prescribed by the vet earlier.

Question 3.

Do you think it is a real-life episode or mere fiction? Or is it a mixture of both?

Answer: The story seems to be a mixture of both. It may be possible for rich persons to overfeed their pets due to love. It is not unusual for them to maintain a vast wardrobe for them either. But it is unlikely for a veterinary doctor to go out of the way and lie in order to save an animal. It is also unusual for anyone to consume food which is given in the name of a pet's health.

Talk about it

1. This episode describes the silly behaviour of a rich woman who is foolishly indulgent, perhaps because she is lonely. Do you think such people are merely silly or can their actions cause harm to others?

Answer: Mrs Pumphrey's actions had a harmful reaction on Tricki's health. She was overparenting' and overfeeding Tricki in the name of love. This worsened his condition to an extent that he had to be hospitalised. People like Mrs Pumphrey are not just merely silly but their actions can definitely have dangerous consequences for others.

2. Do you think there are also parents like Mrs Pumphrey?

Answer: Yes, there are some parents like Mrs Pumphrey who spoil their children by pampering them. They overfeed their children/pets despite being aware of the harmful effects on their health. Parents like Mrs Pumphrey should maintain a healthy lifestyle of their family and pets.

3. What would you have done if you were : (i) a member of the staff in Mrs Pumphrey's household, (ii) neighbour? What would your life have been like, in general?

Answer:

(i) If I were a member of the staff in her household I would have not followed Mrs Pumphrey's command to feed Tricki blindly. In fact, I would have fed him according to the vet's advice. I would have also skipped sending the unnecessary stuff like toys, cushions etc to the hospital. My life would have been a very busy one, as I would have had to take care of the household chores and meet Tricki's demands on time.

(ii) If I were Mrs Pumphrey's neighbour, I would have advised her to consult a vet and follow his advice strictly keeping in mind Tricki's deteriorating health. I would have also been supportive in their hard time when Tricki was hospitalised. My life as Mrs Pumphrey's neighbour would have been full of surprises and gifts as Mrs Pumphrey was a loving lady.

4. What would you have done if you were in the narrator's place?

Answer: If I were in the narrator's place, I would have treated Tricki with a similar amount of compassion and love. I would have been equally caring as Mr James Herriot towards Tricki. I would have just been a little more stern while advising Mrs Pumphrey to put Tricki on a strict diet knowing her way of showing love. I would have also not consumed Tricki's share of eggs, wine and brandy sent by Mrs Pumphrey.