

TUG & FRIENDS

Titus Finds a Place to Belong

Story by Daniel Adams



A Tug & Friends Story

A story about kindness, responsibility, and a place to belong.

Includes family conversation questions and activities.

Ready or not!



“Ready or not, here I come!” called Tug.

Lucas tucked behind a hay bale. Lillian tried very hard not to giggle.
Remi and Oakie peeked around the barn.

At the homestead, an ordinary afternoon was full of extraordinary hiding places.

Chuck calls



Dad was near the porch when Chuck called.

“Hey, Daniel. I found a dog,” Chuck said quietly. **“He’s in rough shape. I’ve put some water nearby, but he won’t let me close. Could you come?”**

“I’m on my way,” Dad answered.

A small, quiet corner



Titus stood in a sheltered corner of Chuck's yard.

His coat was dusty. His body was much too thin. When Chuck moved, Titus stepped back.

"You're safe here," Chuck whispered.

But Titus did not know that yet.

Dad waits



Dad stopped well back.

He did not reach. He did not hurry.

“Hello, Titus,” he said softly, reading the name on the worn tag. **“We can take our time.”**

Titus lifted his head.

Something about that quiet voice made him take one step closer.

One more step



Then another step.

And another.

At last, Titus rested his head against Dad.

Chuck hardly dared to speak. **“Well, would you look at that?”**

Dad stayed still.

“Hello, friend,” he whispered.

For the first time that afternoon, Titus’s tail moved.

We'll help you



“I can give him a safe place while we get help and find out where he belongs,” Dad said.

Chuck nodded. **“I hoped you’d say that.”**

Just as they were ready to leave, two unfamiliar vehicles stopped outside.

“That’s our dog!” one called.

Titus shrank close to Dad.

Questions first



Dad kept his voice calm.

“Can you show us something that identifies him as yours? A photograph? A veterinary record?”

“We live just down the road,” came the answer. **“Come and see.”**

Dad looked at Chuck.

“Will you come with us?”

“Of course.”

Beyond the gate



They followed to the property and stopped outside the gate.

There were other animals there.

An empty bowl lay on its side. A water dish was dry. The little shelter had no dry place to rest.

Dad's heart grew heavy.

Now he understood why Titus had wandered away.

A firm, kind voice



“These animals need help,” Dad said. **“They need water, food, and proper care.”**

“Just leave the dog,” one of the vehicles grumbled.

“I won’t leave Titus here while he’s in this condition,” Dad answered. **“I’m contacting the dog warden so this can be handled properly.”**

He did not shout.

He did not argue.

He and Chuck left with Titus and called for help.

Help begins



Dad explained what they had seen and arranged for Titus to see a veterinarian.

The veterinarian checked him gently and made a plan for his meals, rest, and recovery.

“Getting stronger will take time,” Dad told him.

Titus leaned close.

“We have time.”

A different homecoming



Back at the homestead, Lillian spotted them first.

“A dog!”

Lucas hurried beside her—then stopped.

“Dad,” he asked, much more quietly, **“why does he look so... tired?”**

Mom came to meet them.

“Let’s give him room,” she said. **“We can welcome him softly.”**

Lucas's question



“His name is Titus,” Dad said. **“He hasn’t had the care he needed.”**

Lucas looked at the thin dog.

“Did he do something wrong?”

“No,” Mom said gently. **“Not one bit. Animals don’t have to earn food or water or kindness. Those are things we owe them when they depend on us.”**

New neighbors



Mercedes noticed the newcomer.

Grace watched from a comfortable distance. Aramis, Mei Leing, and Jezebel each found a safe place to observe.

New neighbors - a quiet hello



“Not everyone has to say hello today,” Mom reminded the family.

Remi smiled. **“We can be patient.”**

So the first introductions were small and quiet, with Mom and Dad nearby.

A place of his own



Oakie helped prepare a soft resting place.

Remi brought the care chart. Lillian helped Mom set out a clean water bowl.

Tug waited near the doorway.

“We saved you a spot,” he told Titus softly.

Titus lay down.

For now, resting was enough.

Around the table



That evening, Lucas was quieter than usual.

Finally, he asked, **“How could somebody let him get like that?”**

Dad set down his supper.

“Sometimes people don’t understand the work. Sometimes they need help. Sometimes they make hurtful choices. We don’t know every part of Titus’s story.”

Mom nodded. **“But we do know he needed care.”**

Being sorry takes action



“What if they just forgot?” Lillian asked.

“Then they needed to notice and make it right,” Mom said. **“A hungry animal can’t wait forever for us to remember.”**

“What if taking care of him was too hard?” asked Oakie.

“Then a grown-up should ask for help,” Dad answered.

“Responsibility includes knowing when you need it.”

Every day means every day



“Even on rainy days?” Lucas asked.

“Even on rainy days,” said Dad.

“Even when we want to play?”

“Then we finish the care first,” Mom said. **“If an animal never gets the food, water, or care it needs, it can become terribly sick or worse. That is why checking matters.”**

Lucas nodded slowly.

“They can’t turn on the faucet themselves.”

Who is responsible?



"Can we take care of Titus?" Remi asked.

"You can help," Dad said. **"Mom and I are responsible for making sure his care is done."**

"Even if one of us forgets?" asked Lucas.

"Even then," Mom answered. **"A chart helps us remember. A grown-up checks."**

Tug beamed. **"A whole team!"**

The care team



Together, they made a plan.

Fresh water. Meals following the veterinarian's instructions. A clean resting place. Gentle exercise when Titus was ready.

And someone to notice if he seemed unwell.

"What about love?" Lillian asked.

Mom smiled. **"Love belongs in every box."**

A difficult morning



The next morning, Lucas wanted to race outside.

Then he saw the care chart.

“Oh. Water first.”

He helped Mom check the bowl and replace it with fresh water.

On his way out, he glanced at Titus.

“I almost forgot,” Lucas admitted.

Mom smiled. **“And then you remembered. That’s what practicing responsibility looks like.”**

Room for a no



Later, Lucas brought a toy to Titus.

But Titus turned away and settled on his bed.

“Doesn’t he like me?” Lucas asked.

“He may just need a rest,” Dad said. **“Watch what he’s telling you.”**

Lucas placed the toy nearby and moved back.

“You can play when you’re ready.”

That was kindness, too.

Still gentle



That night Lucas asked another question.

“If people weren’t kind to him, how can he still be so loving?”

“He’s finding people he feels safe with,” Mom said. **“But he can like us and still feel afraid sometimes.”**

“Will he forget?”

“We can’t promise that,” Dad answered. **“We can give him good days, one after another.”**

A visitor at the gate



A few days later, the dog warden, Officer Lynn, arrived.

Dad and Chuck answered questions about finding Titus and what they had seen.

Then the warden spoke gently to the family.

“The other animals have been brought to safety. They’re receiving care, too.”

Lucas let out a breath he hadn’t realized he was holding.

“All of them?”

“All of them.”

The paperwork



“Daniel, the former keepers have agreed to give up Titus,” Officer Lynn explained. **“The situation has been resolved. No charges are being pursued against you.”**

The warden brought the papers the family needed to make Titus’s new home official.

Dad and Mom read them carefully.

Then Dad signed.

“Welcome home, Titus.”

One more mouth



“One more mouth to feed,” Dad said with a smile.

“And one more bowl to wash!” said Oakie.

“One more bed to keep clean,” added Remi.

“One more friend,” whispered Lillian.

Lucas looked at Titus, then at the care chart.

“We’re glad you’re here,” he said. **“Even when it’s chore time.”**

Stronger, slowly



Days became weeks.

With veterinary care, steady meals, rest, and gentle company, Titus began to grow stronger.

His coat looked better. His steps grew lighter.

Some days he still wanted quiet.

The family gave him that, too.

Ready to run



One bright afternoon, after the veterinarian said he was ready, Titus bounded across the safely fenced play area.

His ears bounced. His tail waved.

Lucas laughed so hard he could barely call, **“Look at him go!”**

Tug watched Titus circle back toward the family.

“He knows where home is.”

A place to belong



At supper, Mom asked, **“What does it mean to give an animal a home?”**

“A place to sleep,” said Lillian.

“Food and water,” said Oakie.

“Care when they’re sick,” said Remi.

Lucas thought for a moment.

“It means they can count on us. Tomorrow, too.”

Dad smiled.

“A family isn’t just where you belong. It’s who makes sure you’re cared for.”

Nearby, Titus rested his head on his paws.

He belonged.



Let's talk together

Ask one or two questions at a time. Children may answer with words, drawings, or pointing to a picture.

1. Why did Dad wait for Titus to come closer?
 2. Lucas wondered whether Titus had done something wrong. What would you tell Lucas?
 3. How did Titus show that he needed space or rest?
 4. What is the difference between loving an animal and doing the work of caring for one?
 5. Why does an animal need care even when we are busy, tired, or eager to play?
 6. What did the grown-ups do when the situation was too serious to handle alone?
 7. What could a family do if they could no longer provide the care an animal needs?
 8. What did Lucas mean by "Tomorrow, too"?
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For grown-ups

The story includes non-graphic animal neglect and one plain statement that animals can die without essentials. Pause to reassure sensitive children. They are not responsible for fixing cruelty or investigating adults. A frightened animal may need space even if it looks friendly. If a child sees an animal in trouble, they should tell a trusted grown-up and stay safely back; adults contact appropriate local animal-welfare help.

Titus's care team

Draw or write the animal's name: _____

Care job	How I can help	Grown-up responsible	Grown-up checked
Check and refresh drinking water			
Meals, following the animal's care plan			
Clean, comfortable resting space			
Appropriate exercise and enrichment			
Notice changes in eating, movement, or behavior	Tell a grown-up		
Health appointments and treatment	Adult job		

Our promise: We will make sure this animal has care every day. If we cannot manage, we will ask for help.

For families: Adapt the chart to the animal's species, age, health, and veterinary advice. Young children help under supervision. Adults remain responsible for every task, including when a child is absent or forgets. Do not use a completed chore chart as a substitute for checking the animal and its supplies.

What would you do?

1. Lucas wants to play, but it is time to check Titus's water.

- A. Wait until Titus complains.
- B. Help the grown-up check and refresh the water first.
- C. Assume someone else has done it.

2. Titus turns away from a toy and lies down.

- A. Put the toy against his face.
- B. Keep calling until he gets up.
- C. Give him space and ask a grown-up if worried.

3. You see an unfamiliar animal that looks hurt or frightened.

- A. Stay safely back and tell a trusted grown-up.
- B. Try to catch it yourself.
- C. Go into someone's yard to investigate.

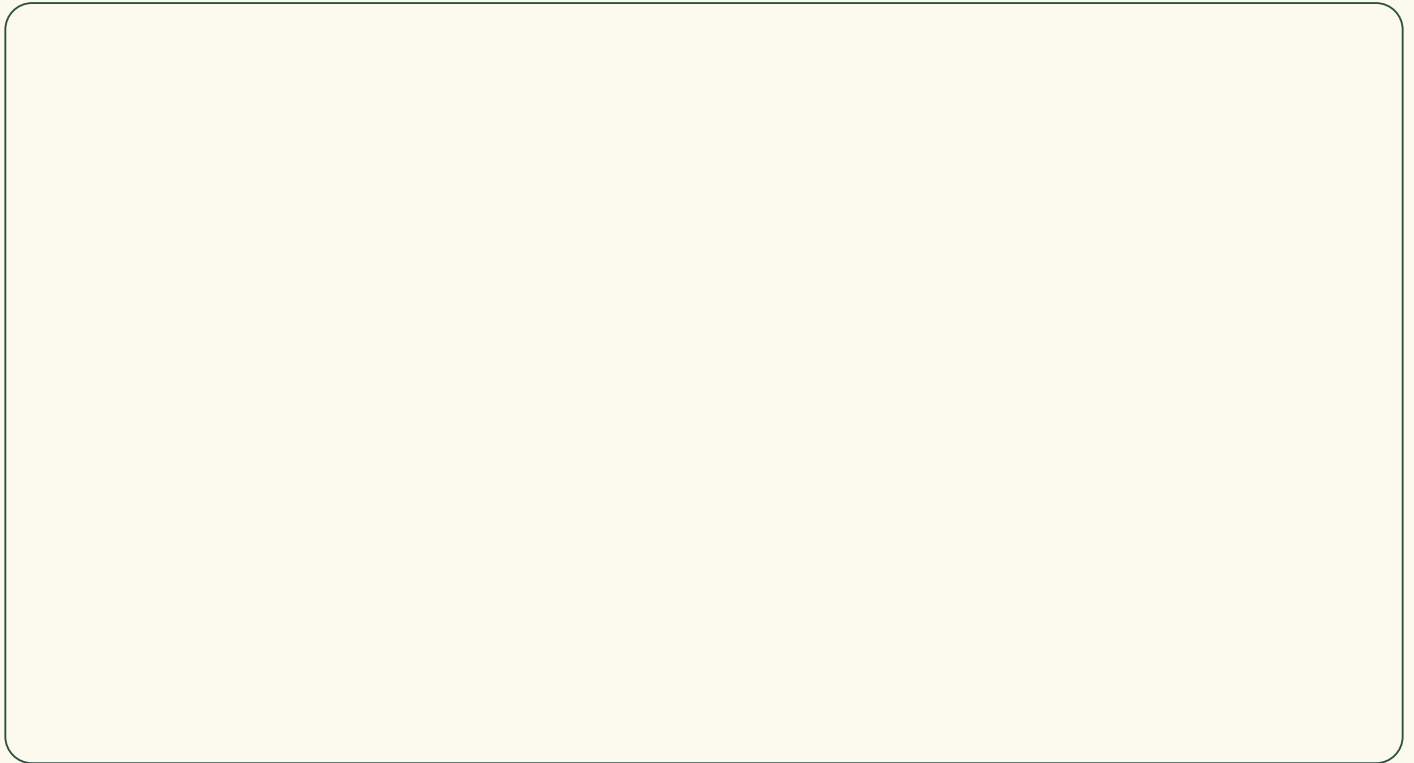
4. A family is struggling to care for its animal.

- A. Keep it secret forever.
- B. Ask a veterinarian, shelter, rescue, or appropriate local animal-welfare service for help before the animal goes without care.
- C. Stop checking its needs.

Answers for grown-ups: 1 B; 2 C; 3 A; 4 B. Ask "Why?" and connect each choice to Titus's story. Avoid shaming a child for a wrong answer.

Make a kindness promise

On your own paper, draw Titus enjoying his new home. If you print this page, you may use the box below. Add drinking water, a safe resting place, a suitable activity, and a grown-up he can depend on.



An animal can count on me to help with:

When I need help, I will ask:

One way I can show kindness without touching an animal is:

Family challenge: With a grown-up, check your own animal's care supplies—or learn what a local shelter actually needs before planning a donation. Never visit or approach an unfamiliar animal without adult guidance.