

This is a short excerpt from Chyorny's long and beloved work.

It is purportedly the diary of Chyorny's dog Mikki, who lives with a little girl, Zina, and who likes to think of himself as far more than a dog.

The Diary of Mikki, Fox Terrier

Sasha Chyorny

How I Got Lost

The pencil is shaking in my teeth... Oh, what has happened! In films it is called a "tragedy," but in my opinion it is even worse. We returned to the beach from Paris and I went a bit loony. I ran by all the cabins, jumped over a sleeping woman, sniffed some familiar kids—little darlings!—and barked joyfully. To hell with the zoo and hello dog freedom!

And then... I went too far. I turned into the park, dove into some kind of green alleyway, landed in someone's garden, mauled an old shoe, headed off into a field, then to an avenue—and then ruin! I was lost... I sat on a stone, shivered and lost my "presence of mind." Up until then, I had no idea what that "presence" was all about...

I smelled the avenue: unknown soles, dust, rubber and car grease... where is my villa? All the houses suddenly looked identical. The children behind the fences, like mice, all looked alike. I fled to the sea—but it was a different sea! The sky was not right and the beach was empty and rough... Old men and children were pulling oysters from the cliffs, and nobody even looked at me. But of course, idiotic oysters are more interesting than a homeless fox terrier! Sand flew in my eyes. The reed mutters some kind of nonsense. Fine for him, the fool, he's rooted in one place and can't get lost... Tears the size of peas rolled down my face. And, most horrible of all: I am naked! I left my collar at home, and my address is printed on the collar. Any little girl (that's how I would do it!) would have read it and led me home. Ukh! If it had not been low tide, I might perhaps have drowned myself...

Footnote: And I would have been a serious fool if I had, since I ended up figuring out where I was.



In front of a yellow fence near the palisade I leaned against a telegraph pole and hung my head. I once saw a picture of a lost dog in a pose like that and I quite liked it.

Hey, I was not mistaken. A rosy color showed through the gate. A little girl (they are always more pleasant than boys) came out and sat down in front of me in the road.

“What’s wrong, little doggie?”

I sobbed and lifted my right paw. No words were necessary.

“You lost? Wanna come with me? Maybe they will find you yet... My mama is very nice, and, as for papa, we’ll sort that out.”

What could I do? Sleep in the forest?... What am I a wild camel? My stomach was empty. I went with the little girl and as thanks licked her leg. If she is ever lost, I will absolutely take her home...

“Mama!” she sang. “Mommy! I brought Fifi, she’s lost. Can she stay with us for now?”

Oh! Why “Fifi”?! I am Mikki, Mikki! But I, for all my wonderful thoughts, cannot even say a complete word in their human language... So be it. You dig a hole, you’re sure enough going to fall into it...

Mama put her pince-nez on her nose (as if without her pince-nez she could not see that I was lost!) and smiled, “What a sweetie! Give her, little one, some milk with bread. She has a very honest face... Then we’ll see.”

“She has”?... *He* has, not *she*! After all, I am a boy. But I wanted to eat really badly. So I had to be humble.

I ate without rushing, as if I were doing them a favor. “Your treat? Thank you, I will have a bite. But, please, don’t think that I am some kind of hungry, stray dog.”

Then papa arrived. I have no idea why these papas are always sticking their noses in things...

“What’s this dog? Why is it, Lily, that you need to drag all sorts of animals into the villa? It might even be diseased... Git, git outta here! Well!”

Me? Diseased?

The little girl began sniveling. I retreated with dignity toward the gate. But mama looked sternly at papa. He was well-trained: he exhaled, shrugged his shoulders and went out onto the veranda to read his paper. Surrender?

And I rose up on my hind legs in front of mama, did three steps and jumped over a bench. Hup! Then ran a circle around the room and back again...

“Mamochka, what a smart one!”

And how. If I were a human, I would have been a professor long ago.



The new papa made as if he didn't even notice me. I did the same with him... I saw Zina in my dreams and barked from happiness: she fed me *gogol-mogol** with a spoon and said: "You are my treasure... if you go missing again, I will never get married."

Lili woke up—the sunrise had lit the window—and dangled her head off the bed:

"Fifi! What's the matter?"

Nothing. Just suffering. To a cat it's all the same: Zina today, Lili tomorrow. But I am an honest, loyal dog...

The second day without Zina. A fat little boy came to visit my new girl—a cousin. Dogs, thank God, don't have any cousins... He sat on my back and almost squashed me. Then he hitched me up to a little car and I stubbornly sat down! A dog! Hooked to a car?! He played the piano with my paws. And I took it all and, out of politeness, did not even bite him...

Lili's mama appreciated me. When the girl knocked over her bowl of soup, she pointed to me:

"Be more like Fifi! See how carefully she eats..."

Fifi again! When someone doesn't like something, they say, "fil!" Fi-fi, then, means something they really don't like? It's a chicken name... I found some blocks with letters on them under a cabinet and put them together: "MIKKI." I pulled the girl by her dress: read! It would seem pretty clear. But she didn't understand anything and cried out:

"Mama! Fifi knows how to do tricks!"

"Fine. Give it some chocolate."

Akh, when will they find me? I ran off to the city offices. Perhaps Zina put up a notice that I was missing. Nothing of the kind. A disheveled mongrel was lounging at the entrance and snarled:

"R-ruf! Where are you bustling to, tramp?"

Me? Tramp? Buddy, you are wretched!...

Lucky for you I am so educated that I don't get into fights with mongrels...



"A burden fell from my shoulders"... Where it fell, I do not know, but in a word, I was found!

Lili took me to the beach. And suddenly, in the distance, a violet and white dress, a striped ball and blonde curls. Zina!!

* egg yolks beaten with sugar

Oh, how we kissed, how we squealed, how we cried!

Lili walked up quietly and asked:

“Is this your Fifi?”

“Yes, only it is not Fifi, but Mikki...”

“Akh, Mikki! Excuse me, I didn’t know. Allow me to return her. She got lost and I took care of her.

And then there was “tragedy” in her eyes.

But Zina pulled her out of it. She thanked her “so-so-so much” and promised to bring me over to visit. They will become friends, I can already see that.

I, of course, was indebted to Lili and put my front paw across my chest: Merci! So-so-so much...

And, embarrassed, I followed behind Zina, not straying more than a step from her dear, dark legs.

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