

Red and silver

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Penny, the youngest of Balto's litter, is done with being overshadowed by weak Kodi for all the wrong reasons. And she's going to do something about it. //Written slightly like a tale//

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1 - Not up to the test

“Come on, kids! Run as fast as you can! Run, run, run!” A dark grey wolfdog with a white underside barked excitedly to his pups, who panted heavily and sprinted as fast as their chubby legs could go so they could keep up with their papa. The barrage of dark red-and-white fur slid clumsily to the side and into doorsteps on the snowy ground, giggling up a storm as they tried to climb back on their paws.[br]

They reached the end of the snow-covered street, just barely catching up with their papa, when the wolfdog sped up just a little more and lifted himself off of the ground, sailing effortlessly through the air, until he smashed into a giant log perched high on a mountain of boxes. Balto dug his claws into the petrified wood and pulled himself up, tossing his body to the top of the log. His pups all gazed with admiration at him, and he held his head high. “Come on, kids, jump across this log to the other side. It’s great practice for wrestling. How do you think I became such a great sled dog now?”[br]

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The pups all gasped with realization, and barked excitedly.[br]

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“AIRIGHT!” Aleu, the only pup with light tan fur and a white underside, yipped up the loudest, immediately catching the attention of her brothers and sisters. Since she was the ringleader and daredevil, she sped up first, and quite beautifully jumped up off of the ground like her papa, bearing her front claws as she did so. Aleu landed a lot lower than Balto, and even skidded down a few marks after she hit. Balto quickly leaned over to snap her up by her neck.[br]

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Aleu quickly hoisted her small body up the log, and pushed with her hind legs, until she rolled over to the other side, with her tongue lolling out the side of her mouth happily.[br]

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The other pups cheered for her. “Next,” Balto called, proudly looking down at his strongest and most exotic daughter.[br]

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All the kids looked around at each other, trying to coax one another to take the challenge and get over the log like their middle sister. Finally, one of the oldest pups yelped, “I’ll do it,” and stepped cockily up to the front. It was Nanno, who was dark red in fur color with a white underside, also.[br]

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Nanno stuck his doggy butt in the air and gave his fluffy Husky tail a spin, then took off in true Balto fashion, ears pinned against his head in speed. When he came close to the log he leapt from the snowy ground, managing to land his claws in the exact same claw marks as Aleu’s. Everyone gasped in surprise. Nanno, smiling smugly, lifted himself up with ease and rolled over the log. Balto howled in encouragement and the remaining puppies yelped their congratulations. Aleu gave her favorite brother a happy lick on the cheek.[br]

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After that, Ketla (dark red with a white underside) leapt, Hunter (same) sprang, and Dasa (same) jumped. The boys went fairly easily, and even though Dasa slipped and Balto had to grab her by her

neck, the dogs still gave her props for trying.[br]

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All that was left was Kodi and Penny. Penny was the youngest puppy, who was dark red and white like her brothers and sisters, but had a completely red face instead of their white ones. She was pretty confident that she could make the jump. But Kodi, on the other hand... Kodi was one of the younger pups, and couldn't do *anything*. He was too weak to keep up when they ran, he had to eat extra meals, and he was injured really easily. When Kodi stepped up to try before Penny, everyone except for Balto rolled their eyes.[br]

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"Kodi," Penny batted her eyelashes, padding up to him. He turned to her. "Good luck on your jump." She jumped up and licked his chin, and he nudged her back, saying, "Thanks, Penny. You too." Penny just smiled sweetly back and got out of the way. "You'll need it when you fa-aall," she whispered in a sing-song voice.[br]

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Kodi dug his paws in the snow and geared up for the run. He took off in an amazing sprint, shocking all the dogs, and when he jumped, sailed through the air like a goose. All muzzles were open when the pup hit the log a little to the right of his family's, and began to silently cheer for him when he began to climb up.[br]

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Balto looked down at his son, giving him a "Good job, son," kind of look.[br]

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Kodi panted happily at his papa and wagged his tail.[br]

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All of a sudden his claws broke right through the wood, and the pup plummeted downward. "Ahhhh!" he yelped, grabbing harder onto the log, but still scraping through it just as quickly. Balto swooped down to snap his son up, but missed because Kodi was so far down.[br]

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"KODI!" Balto barked in a panic.[br]

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"Papa, help!" Kodi slid to the edge of the log, holding on for dear life, with the lower half of his body swinging wildly. He wasn't sure how much longer he could hold on...[br]

2 - Penny

“AhhhHHHH!” Kodi screamed, his claws breaking loose, and Balto watched helplessly as his son fell through the air towards the ground.[br]

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“Kodi!” Ketla yelped in a panic.[br]

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“Don’t die!” Dasa pray-whispered.[br]

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“Toldja he was gonna fall...” Penny said loudly, with fear in her eyes.[br]

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“Oh no, Kodi!” Jenna barked louder than any of them, suddenly bursting from the street in long, graceful strides. She easily sailed over Jenny and ducked under the log, and smoothly caught her pup by the neck in her jaws. The dogs all let out a deep breath.[br]

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Jenna set Kodi down and nuzzled him worriedly under the chin. “Kodi, are you alright?” The puppy looked embarrassed as he muttered, “Uh huh,” and ran under his mama, thankful to be alive.[br]

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Just as Balto was about to speak, he watched Penny suddenly race past her mama and brother, take a flying jump, and land gracefully on the log. She hurled herself over to the other side, landing in the snow with a thump. “I made it!” She said to her brothers and sister. They all cheered for her and leapt on her in a celebratory dog pile.[br]

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“So, this is what you’re doing?” Jenna asked Balto in a strong, disappointed voice. Kodi walked sadly between her paws. “You said you were going to play with pups, Balto.”[br]

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The wolfdog slid down from the log and stepped forward, slightly agitated. “Which was precisely what I was doing, Jenna. Why are you following me? I thought this was papa time...”[br]

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“I followed to be safe!” Jenna said to him calmly. “I just wanted to know if the pups would be alright. And then I find my son dangling off a log, his life about to end.” She spoke sharply and sent shivers through Balto’s spine, and made her son’s eyes widen. Jenna put a dainty paw over her eyes and let a breath out, then lifted it and regarded her mate tensely.[br]

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“Balto, they are just puppies. I just want them to be around us, on the ground only, and happy. I... I’m too new at this mother thing to handle losing a pup...” Her eyes filled with unshed tears.[br]

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Balto stepped forward and whispered, “Jenna...”, feeling absolutely horrible, but by that time all the other pups had scampered back across the log and tackled Kodi in a hug.[br]

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“Did you get hurt at all?”[br]

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“We love you, Kodi!”[br]

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“Was it super scary, bro?”[br]

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They all nuzzled and barked at their brother, ignoring their mama and papa for the moment, all excited to see him alive and well.[br]

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But Penny slunk off away from them, glaring at Kodi.[br]

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He was so weak. He always needed something from their mama and papa. Kodi was the favorite, and didn't even deserve it! Penny tried hard to live in her mama's shadow, but it was hard with Kodi's neediness taking away all of the attention. Penny knew all her brothers and sister felt the same way.[br]

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The little puppy smiled at Kodi. “Time to get up or get out, kid...” she said silently.[br]

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