

FOR ALL BOYS

# Boys' Life

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## THIS MONTH'S COVER

**A** WINNER TWO WAYS is this month's cover. The vessel is now the Sea Explorer Ship Porpoise, saved from a derelict's grave by Sea Explorers of the Los Angeles area. As she was being refitted, her picture was snapped by Nicholas Glass of Torrance, California. His color slide won Nicholas first prize in the Scouting division of the 1957 Boys' Life Photo Contest. With both vessel and picture so striking, we just naturally had to run down the story of the Porpoise. You'll find it on page 28.

# Tenderfoot in Space

THE SHUTTLE ROCKET TO THE JUMP OFF SATELLITE WAS READY. THEN  
WOULD COME THE BIG JUMP TO VENUS. INCREDIBLY CHARLIE DIDN'T  
WANT TO GO—NOT WITHOUT NIXIE • By ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

PART 1 OF 3 PARTS

"HEEL, NIXIE," THE boy said softly, "and keep quiet."

The little mongrel took position left and rear of his boy, waited. He could feel that Charlie was upset and he wanted to know why—but an order from Charlie could not be questioned.

The boy tried to see whether or not the policeman was noticing them. He felt light-headed—neither he nor his dog had eaten that day. They had stopped in front of this supermarket, not to buy, for the boy had no money left, but because of a BOY WANTED sign in the window.

It was then that he had noticed the reflection of the policeman in the glass.

The boy hesitated, trying to collect his cloudy thoughts. Should he go inside and ask for the job? Or should he saunter past the policeman? Pretend to be just out for a walk?

The boy decided to go on, get out of sight. He signaled the dog to stay close and turned away from the window. Nixie came along, tail high. He did not care where they went as long as he was with Charlie. Charlie had belonged to him as far back as he could remember; he could imagine no other condition. In fact Nixie would not have lived past his tenth day had not Charlie fallen in love with him: Nixie had been the least attractive of an unfortunate litter; his mother was Champion Lady Diana of Ojai—his father was unknown.

The cop said: "Not so fast, boy. What's that dog's name?"



But Nixie was not aware that a neighbor boy had begged his life from his first owners. His philosophy was simple: enough to eat, enough sleep, and the rest of his time spent in playing with Charlie. This present outing had been Charlie's idea, but any outing was welcome. The shortage of food was a nuisance but Nixie automatically forgave Charlie such errors—after all, boys will be boys and a wise dog accepted the fact. The only thing that troubled him was that Charlie did not have the happy heart which was a proper part of all hikes.

As they moved past the man in the blue uniform, Nixie felt the man's interest in them, sniffed his odor, but could find no real unfriendliness in it. But Charlie was nervous, alert, so Nixie kept his own attention high.

The man in uniform said, "Not so fast, boy."

Charlie stopped, Nixie stopped. "You speaking to me officer?"

"Yes. What's your dog's name?"

Nixie felt Charlie's sudden terror, got ready to attack. He had never yet had to bite anyone for his boy—but he was instantly ready. The hair between his shoulder blades stood up.

Charlie answered, "Uh . . . his name is Spot."

"So?" The stranger said sharply, "Nixie?"

Nixie had been keeping his eyes elsewhere, in order not to distract his ears, his nose, and the inner sense with which he touched people's feelings. But he was so startled at hearing this stranger call him by name that he turned his head and looked at him.

"His name is Spot," said the policeman quietly. "And mine is Santa Claus. But you're Charlie Vaughn and you're going home." He spoke into his helmet phone: "Nelson, reporting a pickup on that Vaughn missing-persons filer. Send a car. I'm in front of the new supermarket."

They were taken to the local Justice of the Peace. "You're Charles Vaughn?"

Nixie's boy felt unhappy and said nothing.

"Speak up, son," insisted the old man. "If you aren't, then you must have stolen that dog." He read from a paper: ". . . accompanied by a small brown mongrel, male, well trained, responds to the name 'Nixie.' Well?"

Nixie's boy answered faintly, "I'm Charlie Vaughn."

"That's better. You'll stay here until your parents pick you up." The judge frowned. "I can't understand your running away. Your folks are emigrating to Venus, aren't they?"

"Yes, sir."

"You're the first boy I ever met who didn't

want to make the Big Jump." He pointed to a pin on the boy's lapel. "And I thought Scouts were trustworthy. Not to mention obedient. What got into you, son? Are you scared of the Big Jump? 'A Scout is Brave.' That doesn't mean you don't have to be scared—everybody is at times. 'Brave' simply means you don't run even if you are scared."

"I'm not scared," Charlie said stubbornly. "I want to go to Venus."

"Then why ran away when your family is about to leave?"

Nixie felt such a burst of warm happy-sadness from Charlie that he licked his hand.

"Because Nixie can't go?"

"Oh." The judge looked at boy and dog. "I'm sorry, son. That problem is beyond my jurisdiction." He drummed his desk top. "Charlie . . . will you promise, Scout's honor, not to run away again until your parents show up?"

"Uh . . . yes, sir."

"Okay, Joe, take them to my place. Tell my wife she had better see how recently they've had anything to eat."

THE TRIP HOME was long. Nixie enjoyed it, even though Charlie's father was happy-angry and his mother was happy-sad and Charlie himself was happy-sad-worried. When Nixie was home he checked quickly through each room, making sure that all was in order and that there were no new smells. Then he returned to Charlie.

The feelings had changed. Mr. Vaughn was angry. Mrs. Vaughn was sad. Charlie himself gave out such bitter stubbornness that Nixie went to him, jumped onto his lap, and tried to lick his face. Charlie settled Nixie beside him, started digging fingers into the loose skin back of Nixie's neck. Nixie quieted at once, satisfied that he and his boy could face together whatever it was—but it distressed him that the other two were not happy. Charlie belonged to him; they belonged to Charlie; things were better when they were happy, too.

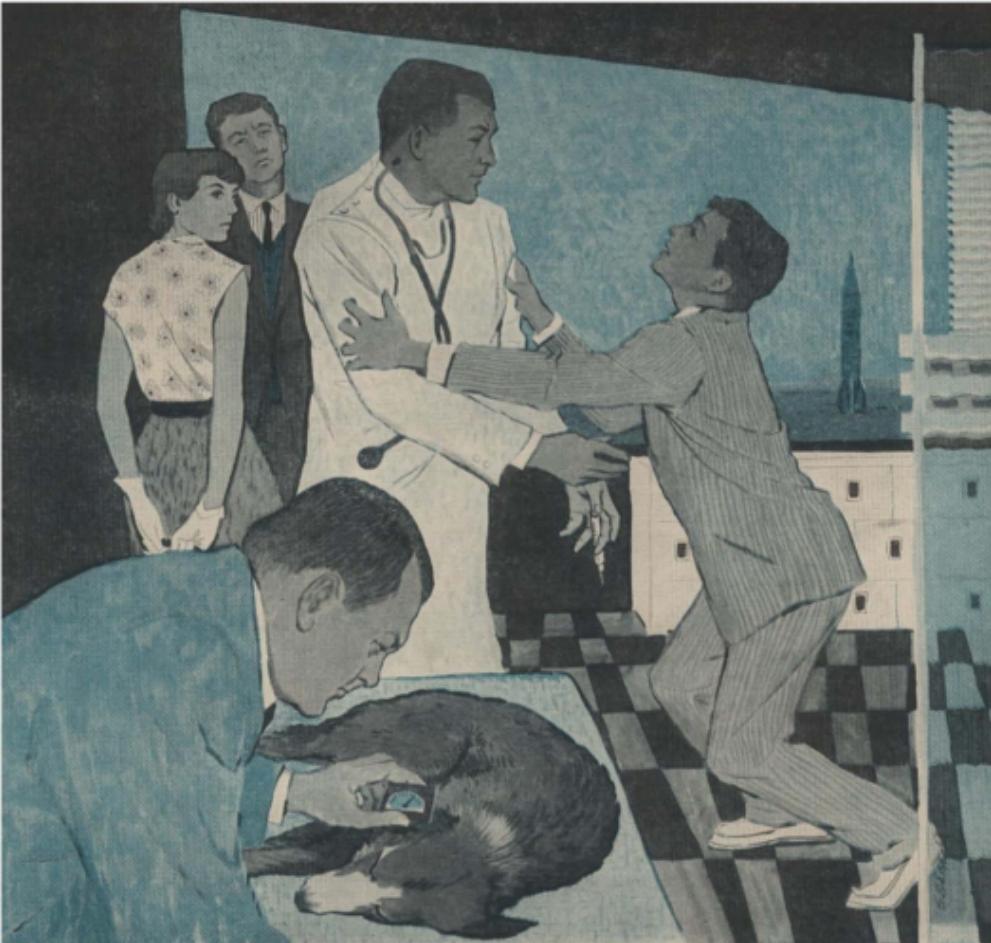
Mr. Vaughn said, "Go to bed, young man, and sleep on it. I'll speak with you again tomorrow."

"Yes, sir. Good night, sir."

"Kiss your mother goodnight. One more thing. Do I need to lock doors to be sure you will be here in the morning?"

"No, sir."

Nixie got on the foot of the bed as usual, tromped out a space, laid his tail over his nose, and started to go to sleep. But his boy was not sleeping; his sadness was taking the distressing form of heaves and sobs. So Nixie got up, went



Charlie grabbed the doctor's arm and asked shrilly: "Is he dead?"

to the other end of the bed and licked away tears—then let himself be pulled into Charlie's arms and tears applied directly to his neck. It was not comfortable and too hot, besides being taboo. But it was worth enduring as Charlie started to quiet down, presently went to sleep.

Nixie waited, gave him a lick on the face to check his sleeping, then moved to his end of the bed.

Mrs. Vaughn said to Mr. Vaughn, "Charles, isn't there anything we can do for the boy?"

"Confound it, Nora. We're getting to Venus with too little money as it is. If anything goes wrong, we'll be dependent on charity."

"But we do have a little spare cash."

"Too little. Do you think I haven't considered it? Why, the fare for that worthless dog would be almost as much as it is for Charlie himself! Out of the question! So why nag me? Do you think I enjoy this decision?"

"No, dear," Mrs. Vaughn pondered. "How much does Nixie weigh? I . . . well, I think I could reduce ten more pounds if I really tried."

"What? Do you want to arrive on Venus a living skeleton? You've reduced all the doctor advises, and so have I."

"Well . . . I thought that if somehow, among us, we could squeeze out Nixie's weight—it's not as if he were a St. Bernard!—we could

swap it against our weight for our tickets."

Mr. Vaughn shook his head unhappily.

"They don't do it that way.

"Let me explain. Surely, it's weight; it's always weight in a space ship. But it isn't just my hundred and sixty pounds, or your hundred and twenty, nor Charlie's hundred and ten. We're not dead weight; we have to eat and drink and breathe air and have room to move—that last is expensive because it takes more ship weight to hold a live person than it does for an equal weight in the cargo hold. For a human being there is a complicated formula—human weight equal to twice the passenger's weight, plus the number of days in space times four pounds. It takes a hundred (To page 73)

## Tenderfoot in Space

(Continued from page 13)

and forty-six days to get to Venus—so Charlie had the calculated weight for each of us amounted to six hundred and sixteen pounds before they even figure in our actual weights. But for a dog the rate is even higher—five pounds per day instead of four."

"That seems unfair. Surely a little dog can't eat as much as a man? Why, Nixie's food costs hardly anything."

Her husband snorted. "Nixie eats his own rations and half of what goes on Charlie's plate. However, it's not only the fact that a dog does eat more for his weight, but also they don't reprocess waste with a dog, not even for hydropathics."

"Why not? Oh, I know what you mean. But it seems silly."

"The passengers wouldn't like it. Never mind; the rule is: five pounds per day for dogs. Do you know what that makes Nixie's fare? Over three thousand dollars?"

"My goodness!"

"My ticket comes to thirty-eight hundred dollars and some, you get by for thirty-four hundred, and Charlie's fare is thirty-three hundred—yet that confounded mongrel dog, which we couldn't sell for his veterinary bills, would cost three thousand dollars. If we had that to spare—which we haven't—the humane thing would be to adopt some orphans, spend the money on him, and thereby give him a chance on an uncrowded planet, not to waste

it on a dog. Confound it; a year from now Charlie will have forgotten this dog."

"I wonder."

"He will. When I was a kid, I had to give up dogs more than once. They died, or something. I got over it. Charlie has to make up his mind whether to give Nixie away, or have him killed humanely." He chewed his lip. "We'll get him a pup on Venus."

"It wouldn't be Nixie."

"He can name it Nixie. He'll love it as much."

"But, Charles, how is it there are dogs on Venus if it's so dreadfully expensive to get them there?"

"Eh? I think the first exploring parties took them there. In any case they're always shipping animals to Venus; our own ship is taking a load of milk cows."

"That must be terribly expensive."

"Yes and no. They ship them in sleep-freeze of course, and a lot of them never revive. But they cut their losses by butchering the dead ones and selling the meat at fancy prices to the colonists. Then the ones that live have calves and eventually it pays off." He stood up. "Nora, let's go to bed. It's sad—but our boy is going to have to make a man's decision. Give the mutt away, or have him put to sleep."

"Yes, dear." She sighed. "I'm coming."

Nixie was in his usual place at

breakfast, lying beside Charlie's chair, accepting tidbits without calling attention to himself. He had learned long ago the rules of the dining room: no barking, no whining, no begging for food, no paws on the table, no part of his pet would make difficulties. Nixie was satisfied. He had learned as a puppy to take the world as it was, cheerful over its good points, patient with its minor shortcomings. Shoes were not to be chewed, people were not to be jumped up on, most strangers must be allowed to approach the house (subject, of course, to strict scrutiny and constant alertness)—a few simple rules and everyone was happy. Live and let live.

He was aware that his boy was not happy even this beautiful morning. But he had explored this feeling carefully, touching his boy's mind with gentle care by means of his canine sense for feeling, and had decided from his superior maturity, that the mood would wear off. Boys were sometimes sad, and a wise dog was resigned to it.

MR. VAUGHN finished his coffee, put his napkin aside. "Well, young man?"

Charlie did not answer. Nixie felt the sadness in Charlie change suddenly to a feeling more aggressive and much stronger but no better. He pricked up his ears and waited.

"Chuck," his father said, "last night I gave you a choice. Have you made up your mind?"

"Yes, Dad." Charlie's voice was very low.

"Eh? Then tell me."

Charlie looked at the table cloth. "You and Mother go to Venus. Nixie and I are staying here."

Nixie could feel anger welling up in the man, felt him control it. "You're figuring on running away again?"

"No, sir." Charlie answered stubbornly. "You can sign me over to the state school."

"Charlie!" It was Charlie's mother who spoke. Nixie tried to sort out the rush of emotions impinging on him.

"Yes," his father said at last, "I could use your passage money to pay the state for your first three years or so, and agree to pay your support until you are eighteen. But I shan't."

"Hub? Why not, Dad?"

"Because, old-fashioned as it sounds, I am head of this family. I am responsible for it—and not just for shelter and clothing, for its total welfare. Until you are old enough to take care of yourself I mean to keep an eye on you. One of the prerogatives which go with my responsibility is deciding where the family shall live. I have a better job offered me on Venus than I could ever hope for here, so I'm going to Venus and my family goes with me. It just happens, too, that your mother and I like to have you around." He drummed on the table, hesitated. "I think your chances are better on a pioneer planet, too—but, when you are of age, if you think otherwise, I'll pay your fare back to Earth. But you go with us. Understand?"

Charlie nodded, his face glum.

"Very well. I'm amazed that you

apparently care more for that dog than you do for your mother and myself. But—

"It isn't that, Dad. Nixie needs—" "Quinn, I don't suppose you realize it, but I tried to figure this out. I'm not taking your dog away from you out of meanness. If I could afford it, I'd buy the hound a ticket. I'm forced to admit that I can't spare the money. But something your mother said last night brought up a third possibility."

Charlie looked up suddenly, and so did Nixie, wondering why the surge of hope in his boy.

"I can't buy Nixie a ticket, but it's possible to ship him as freight."

"Huh? Why, sure, Dad! Oh, I know he'd have to be caged up but I'd go down and feed him every day and pet him and tell him it was all right and—"

"Slow down! I don't mean that. All I can afford is to have him shipped the way animals are always shipped in space ships—in sleep-freeze."

Charlie's mouth hung open. He managed to say, "But that's—"

"That's dangerous. As near as I remember, it's about fifty-fifty whether he wakes up at the other end. But if you want to risk it—well, perhaps it's better than giving him away to strangers and I'm sure you would prefer it to taking him down to the vet's and having him killed."

Charlie grabbed the dog's ear. "All right, Dad," he said gruffly. "We'll risk it, if that's the only way Nixie and I can still be partners."

**N**IXIE DID NOT ENJOY THE LAST FEW days before leaving; they held too many changes. Any proper dog likes excitement but home is for peace and quiet. Things should be orderly there—food and water always in the same place, newspapers to fetch at certain hours, milkmen to supervise at regular times, furniture all in its proper place. But during that week all was change—nothing on time, nothing in order. Strange men came into the house (always a matter for suspicion), but worse yet they carried away pieces of furniture, and he, Nixie, was not even allowed to protest, much less give them the what-for they had coming.

He was assured by Charlie and Mrs. Vaughn that it was "all right" and he had to believe it even though it obviously was not all right. His knowledge of English was accurate for a few dozen words but there was no way to explain to him that almost everything owned by the Vaughn family was being sold, given to friends, or thrown away, nor would it have reassured him.

By the night before they left, the

rooms were bare except for beds. Nixie trotted around the house, sniffing places where familiar objects had been, asking his nose to tell him that his eyes deceived him, whining at the results. Even more upsetting than physical change was emotional change, a heady and not entirely happy excitement which he could feel in all three of his people.

There was a better time that evening, as Nixie was allowed to go to Scout meeting. Nixie always went on hikes and had formerly attended all the meetings. But now he attended only outdoor meetings since an incident the previous winter—Nixie felt that too much fuss had been made about it—just spilled cocoa and a few broken cups and anything it had been that cat's fault.

But this meeting he was allowed to attend because it was Charlie's last Scout meeting on Earth. Nixie was not aware of that but he greatly enjoyed the privilege, especially as the meeting was followed by a party at which Nixie became comfortably stuffed with hot dogs and pops. Scoutmaster McIntosh presented Charlie with a letter of withdrawal, certifying his age and merit badges, and asking his admission into any troop on Venus. Nixie joined happily in the applause, trying to outbark the clapping.

Then the Scoutmaster said, "Okay, Rip."

Rip was senior patrol leader. He got up and said, "Quiet, fellows. Hold it, you crazy savages! Charlie, I don't have to tell you that we're all sorry to see you go, but we hope you have a swell time on Venus and now and then send a postcard to Troop Twenty-Seven and tell us about it. We'll post 'em on the bulletin board. Anyhow, we wanted to get you a going-away present. But Mr. McIntosh pointed out that you were on a very tight budget—especially anything would either cost you more to take with you than we had paid for it, or maybe you couldn't take it at all, which wouldn't be much of a gift."

Nixie's ears pricked. Charlie said softly, "Steady, boy."

"Nixie has been with us almost as long as you have. He's been around, poking his cold nose into things, longer than any of the tenderfoot Scouts and longer even than some of the second class. So we decided he ought to have his own letter of withdrawal, so that the troop you join on Venus will know that Nixie is a Scout in good standing. Give it to him, Kenny."

The scribe passed over the letter. It was phrased like Charlie's letter, save that it named "Kenny Vaughn, Tenderfoot Scout." It was signed by the scribe, the scoutmaster, and the patrol leaders and countersigned by every member of the troop. Charlie showed it to Nixie, who sniffed it. Everybody applauded, so Nixie joined happily in applauding himself.

"One more thing," added Rip. "Now that Nixie is officially a Scout, he has to have his badge. So send him front and center."

**C**CHARLIE DID so. They had worked their way through the Dog Care merit badge together while Nixie was a pup, all feet and floppy ears; it had made Nixie a much more acceptable member of the Vaughn family. But the result-

mentary dog training required for the merit badge had stirred Charlie's interest; they had gone on to Dog Obedience School and Nixie had progressed from easy spoken commands to more difficult silent hand signals, including some fancy ones invented by Charlie.

Charlie used them now. At his signal Nixie trotted forward, sat stiffly at attention, front paws neatly drooped in front of his chest, while Rui fastened the tenderfoot badge to his collar, then released his right paw, salute and gave one short bark, all to hand signals.

The applause was loud and Nixie trembled with eagerness to join it. But Charlie signalled "hold and quiet," so Nixie remained silently poised in salute until the clapping died away. He returned to heel just as silently, though quivering with excitement. The purpose of the ceremony may not have been clear to him—if so, he was not the first tenderfoot Scout to be a little confused. But it was perfectly clear that he was the center of attention and was being approved of by his friends; it was a high point in his life.

But all in all there had been too much excitement for a dog in one week; the trip to White Sands, shut up in a travel case and away from Charlie, was the last straw. When Charlie was finally seated at the baggage room of White Sands Airport, his relief was so great that he had a puppish accident, and was bitterly ashamed.

He quieted down on the drive from airport to spaceport, then was disquieted again when he was taken into a room which reminded him of his unpleasant trips to the veterinary—the smells, the white-coated figure, the bare table where a dog had to hold still and be hurt. He stopped dead.

"Come, Nixie!" Charlie said firmly. "None of that, boy. Up!"

Nixie gave a little sigh, advanced and jumped onto the examination table, stood docile but trembling.

"Have him lie down," the man in the white smock said. "I've got to get the needle into the large vein in his foreleg."

Nixie did so on Charlie's command, then lay tremblingly quiet

while his left foreleg was shaved in a patch and sterilized. Charlie put a hand on Nixie's shoulder blades and soothed him while the veterinary surgeon probed for the vein. Nixie bared his teeth once but did not growl, even though the fear in the boy's mind was beating on him, making him just as afraid.

Suddenly the drug reached his brain and he slumped limp.

Charlie's fear surged to a peak but Nixie's spirit did not. Nixie's tough little spirit had gone somewhere else, out of touch with his friend, out of space and time—wherever it is that the "I" within a man or a dog goes when the body wrapping it is unconscious.

Charlie grabbed the doctor's arm and asked shrilly, "Is he dead?"

"No, of course not."

"I thought he had died."

"Want to listen to his heart beat?"

"Uh, no—if you say he's all right. Then he's going to be okay? He'll live through it?"

The doctor glanced at Charlie's father, back at the boy, then said kindly, "Look, son. If I put your dog over on that shelf, in a couple of hours he'll be sleeping normally and by tomorrow he won't even know he was out. But if I take him back to the chill room and start him on the cycle—" He shrugged. "Well, I've put eight head of cattle under today. If forty percent are revived, it's a good shipment. I do the very best I can."

**C**CHARLIE LOOKED grey. The surgeon looked at Mr. Vaughn, back at the boy. "Son, I know a man who's looking for a dog for his kids. Say the word and you won't have to worry whether this pooh's system will recover from a shock it was never intended to take."

Mr. Vaughn, said, "Well, son?"

Charlie stood mute, in an agony of indecision. At last Mr. Vaughn said sharply, "Chuck, we've got just twenty minutes before we must check in with Emigration. Well? What's your answer? Charlie did not seem to know. Timely he put our one hand, barely touched the still form with the staring, unseeing eyes.

(To be continued next month)