

A close-up photograph of a dog's face, showing its eyes, nose, and fur. The dog has a mix of brown and grey fur. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting with greenery.

# Lost Dog

a short story for English  
reading & speaking

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# Introduction

How do you report a missing dog in your country?

What happens to missing dogs, do you think?

Are there many street dogs in your hometown?

How do they survive?

# Lost Dog

*Look lady, plenty of dogs go missing.*

The police sergeant expressed no sympathy for Maureen's story. Missing dogs was the last thing on his mind.

*But what else am I supposed to do?* she said. *If I don't talk to you, who do I talk to?*

*Fill the form in and we will put out some signs. That's all we can do.*

Just then, two other cops bustled through the door, holding the arms of two young men. Both of them shouting and swearing.

Maureen sat at the long bench by the door and looked at the form.

It asked for the most basic of information.

Name of Dog.

Breed.

Colour.

Description.

And the space to write all of this essential information was minimal.

Maureen didn't know what breed Hamilton was. She found him on the street when he was a puppy. Covered in dirt from the gutter and looking up at her with pitiful brown eyes.

And his colour could best be described as a combination of black and brown. He had a whitish stripe on his nose and he had four white socks.

And how to describe him?

As Mr McKenzie always said: *That's the ugliest damn dog I ever did see.*

It was true. Hamilton would never win any dog shows. One of his ears always flopped down, and he had lop-sided eyes. Mr McKenzie thought he had been hit by a car when he was out on the street.

*Poor guy's probably lucky to be alive.*

But Hamilton had been in Maureen's life for three years. She could not bear to be without him. He was her best friend. Her only friend.

The two police struggled with the two young men. Both of them were in leather jackets and stinking of booze.

Maureen looked in her bag for a pen. And then she saw a bag of Hamilton's snacks. Some dried beef treats that he adored.

Any time Maureen needed him to behave himself, she just took out the bag of beef snacks and shook it in front of her. Hamilton would immediately sit in front of her like the perfectly obedient and well-trained dog.

She would give him a couple of snacks and he would wolf them down and look up at her for more.

She always gave in and threw two more into his mouth.

*Oh Hamilton, she thought. Where are you?*

If she hadn't got talking to Mrs King about the couple on the sixth floor, she would not have been distracted.

Mrs King always wanted to talk about some such nonsense. Either the couple on the sixth floor or the new tenant on the fourth.

She was the self-elected guardian of the building. No one really listened to her apart from Maureen.

And then by the time Mrs King has stopped talking, she looked around and Hamilton was gone.

He often ran off somewhere, but all she had to do was call out his name and he would come running.

But not this time.

She spent the next hour walking around the neighbourhood, calling out his name and shaking the bag of beef snacks.

She even knocked on the doors of her neighbours. The couple on the sixth floor and the new tenant.

But no one had seen him.

Her last choice was to go to Mr McKenzie's store and ask him if he had seen Hamilton. But he shook his head.

*I haven't seen that ugly mutt all day, he said.*

By the time she got home, feeling exhausted and out of options, it was dark.

She didn't want to go to the police station. Making a report at the police station seemed so final. It was like the very last thing you did.

And then you just had to wait.

Either for no news at all and then you gave up all hope.

Or there would be a call to tell you they found him. But it would be bad news.

She dreaded going into the police station. But what choice did she have?

She wrote as much as she could as the form would allow. Then she looked up to see the two young men in leather jackets being

taken through some doors.

They still struggled and swore at the two officers holding them.

The sergeant nodded at the form in her hands.

*You all set?*

*Will you be able to find him?* She asked.

His face softened a little, and he gave her a sad smile.

*We'll try our best, lady. Maybe he's waiting for you outside your door.*

A small glimmer of hope filled Maureen's chest. Maybe.

She went to the counter and handed the form to the sergeant.

*How many dogs go missing in this neighbourhood every month?  
Or every week?*

The sergeant went to speak. But then he closed his mouth and looked down at the form.

*We'll try to find him.*

He spoke again about using a recent picture and making a poster. Pasting them on trees and lampposts.

But Maureen had seen those posters before. They stayed on the trees until kids tore them down. Or the rain washed the ink out of the paper.

Then the missing dog was forgotten.



She slumped her head down to her chest.

What was the point? Why even bother?

She could save herself the heartache for the next two or three weeks and just assume that Hamilton was gone.

*Thank you for your time,* she said to the sergeant.

He nodded at her and she turned away to leave and go home.

The door opened, kicked open by an old man, carrying something in his arms, his back to the door.

He turned, and it was Mr McKenzie.

He saw Maureen and his eyes opened wide.

*Maureen. I've been looking for you.*

In his arms, a dog.

*I found him just down the street,* continued Mr McKenzie. *Mrs King said you came to the police station.*

Maureen looked at the dog in his arms.

*I think he's gonna be okay,* said Mr McKenzie.

# Reading Comprehension Questions

Where does the story take place?

Who is Maureen talking to? And why?

What does the sergeant ask Maureen to do?

Who appears at the station? Describe them.

What information is in the form?

What is the name of Maureen's dog?

How did she acquire her dog?

How long has she had her dog?

How would you describe her dog?

How does Mr McKenzie describe her dog?

What does Maureen have in her bag? What are these things?

What does she use them for?

Who is Maureen's neighbour?

How did Maureen lose her dog?

Why is she reluctant to go to the police station?

Who enters the police station at the end of the story?

# Essential Vocabulary

Missing dogs	Mutt	Description
Police sergeant	Making a report	Dried beef treats
Sympathy	Final	Well-trained dog
Fill the form in	Call to tell	Guardian of the building
Put out some signs	Bad news	Heartache
Bench	Glimmer of hope	Assume
Breed	Recent picture	Thank you for your time
Colour	Poster	Kicked open

## Exercise

There may be a lot of new or unfamiliar vocabulary to you in the story. This is the perfect time to get to know these new and strange words and phrases.

Write down all the new words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look up the meaning of the new vocabulary in a dictionary or online and write down the meaning next to the word or phrase.

It should look something like this:

**Sympathy** – *feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune.*

**Bustled** – *past tense of to bustle. move in an energetic or noisy manner.*

Then write a sentence of your own that uses the new word or phrase correctly.

***That man was terrible to his family. I have no sympathy for him.***

***The teacher was always late and bustled into the class.***

If you do this correctly, it will help you learn many new words and phrases. This will build your English vocabulary and writing down all the words and phrases, making sentences of your own, will all help you to remember all of this new vocabulary.

# Discussion Questions

In your own words, say what happens in this story.

How do you think Maureen feels about her missing dog?

Does she have any hope of finding him again?

Describe the feeling of the police sergeant in the station.

Does he think they can find Maureen's dog?

Mr McKenzie describes the dog as ugly. What does he mean by this? Is he serious? Why say it?

The story describes the dog as Maureen's best friend and her only friend.

What does this mean?

Is it possible to be friends with a dog? How?

What do you think the two men in leather jackets have done?

Why are they being brought into the station?

In the story, it says that Maureen gives her dog beef snacks.

Is this a good thing to do? Why/why not?

Who is Mrs King? What kind of person is she?

Why does Mrs King want to talk about the other tenants in the building?

What kind of person is Mr McKenzie, do you think?

How does Maureen feel about going to the police station?

What usually happens when a dog goes missing in Maureen's neighbourhood?

At the end of the story, Mr McKenzie enters the police station.

Who is the dog?

Why is Mr McKenzie carrying the dog in his arms?

What do you think happened?

Do dogs go missing in your neighbourhood?

How do people try to find them again?

Could people use modern technology to find their missing dogs?

What kind of technology?

Do people steal dogs in some countries?

Why do they do that?

Do you have a dog?

How do you ensure your dog is safe in your hometown?

If your dog went missing, what would you do?

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