

THE FIRST DOG ON THE MOON

by

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Bailey is getting to be an old beagle. The fur on his head and ears has gone gray, and he doesn't so much walk as slowly hop along. But he's still a happy dog, who always looks on the bright side of things. He loves to be outside and feel the sunshine on his back. We beagles are like that. We take joy in everything the world has to offer, from the first moment of our lives until the last. Except maybe visits to the Vet. Or taking heartworm pills.

My name is BJ, and Bailey is my daddy. Some of the fur on my nose is a little gray, too, and I also lay in the grass and feel the sunshine on my back, but this story isn't about me. It's about my daddy, and how he came to be the first Earthling to walk on the Moon. Everything you're going to read is true, I swear.

This story took place a long time ago, when Bailey was young and strong and full of energy, and I was just a little puppy. My daddy was a rare dog,

because he had a great sense of adventure (that's not rare among beagles), but he also had a lot of common sense (*that's* the rare part). For example, he would escape from our fenced yard and travel all over town, sniffing wonderful scents and learning all about the great world. But at the same time he always knew when to cross streets, and when not to, and who it was safe to say "hello" to, and who to avoid. You'll see that this combination of adventure and good sense was a big help on his trip to the Moon.

It's also a good thing that he was creative, because he didn't have a big space agency with lots of money and engineers. He just had himself, and the things he could find in our house and yard. And, of course, he had me.

It all started one evening while we were sitting with our people, watching the news on television. The news was about the upcoming, first-ever manned mission to the Moon. We lived in Florida (we still do), just a few miles from Cape Kennedy, where the huge rocket was going to take off, so we had heard about this for months and months.

Later that night we went outside and looked up. The Moon was nearly full. Suddenly Bailey said, "I could do that! I could go to the Moon. I could get there before the humans, and be first!"

I frisked about (I was just a puppy) and said, "Yes! Yes! Let's go!" Then I stopped. "But you don't have a space agency, and lots of money, and engineers, and a big rocket! How will you get there?"

"A beagle," said Bailey, "can do anything he sets his heart to."

The next day Bailey started trying to reach the Moon. His first idea was to simply jump there. He jumped as high as he could. He didn't even get as high as the top of the fence.

"I had a feeling that wouldn't work," I said.

Next, Bailey took a look at Junior's swingset. It had a slide. "That's my ticket," he said. "I'll use that slide as a ramp. I'll run up it and launch myself to the Moon!"

"Yes! Yes!" I said. That seemed like it might work.

Bailey ran across the yard as fast as he could and leaped to the slide and kept on running...

...only he didn't go up. His feet slipped on the metal and flew every which way in a mad dance and then he fell flat on his tummy and slid to the bottom. He lay there for a moment, and then toppled off onto the grass.

I laughed and laughed.

"I need rocket propulsion," Bailey said next, "like the humans have."

I don't think I mentioned this, but we had a swimming pool in our yard. Our people had a big, inflatable killer whale that they rode in the pool. It was sitting on the deck.

"You know," said Bailey, "when they let the air out of one of these inflatable things, it goes flying. That's just what I need! Rocket propulsion! I'll climb on, and you pull the plug that holds in the air, and it will lift me up and carry me to the Moon!"

The whale was twice Bailey's height and five or six times his length. It took him a while, but he finally got on by running up from behind and jumping over its tail, the way Corporal Agarn used to get on his horse on *F Troop*, which was a television show that was already in reruns in those days.

So Bailey was mounted on the whale, on his stomach, with his legs sticking out to the sides. I don't think a beagle could possibly look more ridiculous.

"Okay," he said, "let out the air."

The air was held inside by a rubber tube with a tiny rubber plug at the top. And I mean *tiny*. I tried to take the rubber plug gently in my teeth, but you know puppy teeth are very sharp, and I'm afraid there was an accident.

The air WOOSHED out of the whale, and sure enough it took off! It shot right out from under Bailey, and the surprise on his face was priceless for a fraction of a second before he fell to the deck.

The whale was still wooshing, but now it was turned around and wooshing straight at us! We had to run for our lives!

"That didn't work," said Bailey, when the excitement was over. Later our people wondered what had happened to the whale, but I was never suspected.

The next day it was very windy (where we live, near the coast, it's almost always windy), and Junior (our child people) was in the yard flying a kite. It was a red box kite. Junior held the end of a string, and the kite was way, way up in the sky. Bailey stood on his hind legs and twirled and jumped and barked. Junior made fun, because he thought Bailey was trying to catch the kite, but I knew what Bailey was *really* saying....

"That's it!" he cried, "That's it! My ticket to the Moon!"

Junior grew tired and went inside. Bailey ran up to the kite.

"Let's give it a try!" he said, grabbing it in his mouth.

I ran up and grabbed it in my mouth, too. I was just a puppy, remember.

"No, No," he said. "You work the string." The string was wound on a stick, but a few inches of the end were lying on the ground.

"You hold down the end with your paw," he said. "Leave the kite to me." With that he bounded across the yard, holding the kite aloft in his mouth.

The wind caught the kite. It lifted the kite. It lifted Bailey... off the ground! His legs flailed! Then his butt hit the ground and he and the kite crashed down. I rolled on my back laughing!

But Bailey picked himself up, , grabbed the kite, and trotted back to my side.

"When it doesn't work," he said, "you learn from it." And he ran across the yard again.

The wind caught the kite and lifted again, but this time as it left the ground Bailey jumped inside the box frame. He placed his four paws on four intersections of the struts and spars, caught a top spar in his mouth, and then the wind blew a big gust and up they went! Bailey and the kite! Over the fence! Over the palm trees! Up, up into the air! Bailey let go of the kite for just an instant to bark back to me, "The string!"

I put a paw on the end of the string. The spool was unwinding fast. I put two paws. It was unwinding *really* fast. With both front paws still on the string, I scooted up my behind and sat on it with all my weight.

Bailey was high now, and getting higher. I could barely see him. He was just a spot of black and brown between the two red squares of the kite.

Then he reached the end of the string. It came with a big jerk that lifted me a little, but then I came back down. I struggled to keep from falling over. And when I had myself under control, I still had the string! I looked up, and Bailey was flying in the kite at the end of the string! How grand!

This is Bailey's story:

* * *

It was hard to balance inside the kite at first. The grip of Bailey's jaws saved him -- his paws kept slipping. As the kite lifted off, it tipped sharply to the left. Bailey leaned desperately the other way, away from the impending crash... and as he did so the kite recovered and tipped to the right instead. So Bailey leaned desperately away from *that* impending crash... and the kite tipped back to the left. After a minute of tipping back and forth, Bailey realized that what he was doing was *steering*. He could make the kite dip and swoop by shifting his weight, and point it in any direction by pulling on the rib in his mouth.

He was flying! It was a great! Then he looked down....

It was a LONG WAY down! The roofs of the houses were rectangles the size of postage stamps. (Bailey knew about postage stamps from an unfortunate licking accident when he was a puppy, but that's another story.) Bailey panicked

for just a second and in that second the kite rolled completely over! Bailey was upside down! His paws flew away from their corners! Then the kite rolled back over again, and by a miracle Bailey got his four paws back in place. He pulled at the kite with his mouth and got it balanced again.

Whew!

After that Bailey took flying *much* more seriously. In fact, he didn't do anything but hang on and balance, so that the kite climbed steadily. Then suddenly there was a big JERK that threw the kite down on its nose!

Bailey frantically regained his balance. Then he noticed he wasn't climbing any more. He had reached the end of the string. He drifted up a little and down a little, a little to one side and then the other, but otherwise held steady. He took a moment to look down again.

His neighborhood lay spread out beneath him. He saw streets, houses, the tops of trees, and translucent blue swimming pools. He saw the big canal where Junior went fishing. He saw the neighborhood store where Junior sometimes bought potato chips, that he shared with Bailey and BJ.

"I'm so high," Bailey thought, "from here I must surely be able to get to the Moon."

But he had to wait until night, when the Moon would be in the sky. So for now he shifted his balance, and pulled to steer the kite back in the direction of the string.

As he descended, he seemed to be – no, he *was* -- moving faster and faster... too fast! How was he going to land? He panicked and pulled up hard on

the kite. That slowed him drastically, but suddenly there was a fence that he barely cleared and then grass and the kite hit on its side and tumbled over and over, with Bailey inside. The ribs of the kite made a cage that protected him as they rolled. Then the kite stopped. Bailey was down, safe and sound but *very* dizzy!

"DADDY! DADDY! Are you alright?" Bailey heard the words as the world spun around him. Slowly, he realized that the fence had been his own fence, and the grass had been his own yard, and the voice was his little girl BJ.

"Well," he said, "that worked out."

That evening Bailey and BJ went outside, ostensibly to sniff around and bark at intruders. But really so Bailey could fly to the Moon.

They had hidden the kite behind the storage shed, so their people wouldn't "put it away." "Put away" is a human phrase that seems to beagles to mean the same as "hide." As Bailey told BJ, "We aren't hiding this kite, we're putting it away." Now they got it out.

BJ was very careful with her end of the string. She took it in her mouth and ran five or six times around the trunk of a young oak tree that stood at one end of the yard. *Then* she sat on it. Between her behind and the oak tree, she vowed, they would not let go.

Bailey picked up the kite and ran across the yard. The wind was brisk. He jumped and his paws fell into the corners of the box as if he'd been doing it his entire life. The kite lifted and together they soared into the air!

Bailey wasn't interested in swooping. He was only interested in getting to the Moon. So he kept the kite level and steady, and climbed on the wind. His eyes were trained ahead. The bright Moon washed out the stars and made the sky silvery instead of black. When the big JERK came, Bailey was expecting it, and righted the kite immediately. He was at the end of the string.

He looked at the Moon. Could he reach it from here? It didn't seem much closer than it had from his yard. Could he jump to it? Maybe.... Should he try? He was tempted....

Let go of the kite and just JUMP! Could he make it to the Moon? He'd be the first Earthling on the Moon!

Bailey was an adventuresome dog, and it was something he wanted to do. But he had a touch of sense, too, and he knew the Moon wasn't any closer at all. If he hadn't been able to jump from his yard, he wouldn't be able to jump from here.

Bailey shifted balance and pulled. The kite came around and swooped back down to the yard. He and the kite rolled through the grass for another dizzying landing.

"I'm getting good at this landing thing," he said to the four or five different BJs circling his head as he lay on the ground.

Bailey thought and thought for the rest of that evening and all the next day. Finally, when it was dark and the Moon was in the sky again, he and BJ went back outside.

“The problem is the string,” said Bailey. “It’s not letting me climb high enough. We need to let go of the string.”

“Then how will you get home?”

“I’ll just fly back and land. I don’t need the string.”

“Will you be able to find our house from up in the sky at night?”

“Hmmm,” said Bailey. “You’re right. We need to find a way to mark the house.”

Bailey thought and thought. At first he couldn’t think of anything that would make his house stand out. Then he said, “The swimming pool! The pool has a light that lights up the water when it’s dark. And the switch is near the ground. We can turn on the pool light.”

“It’s nighttime,” said BJ. “Lots of people will have their pool lights on.”

“Hmmm,” said Bailey. “You’re right. What if you flip the light on and off? I’ll bet no one else has a pool that blinks!”

“You want me to stay out here until who-knows-how-late blinking the pool light? And what if our people notice?”

“Oh, you know our people. Once they start watching television, nothing gets them up, unless they need another can of water, or they have to lift their hind legs.”

“Girls don’t lift their hind legs,” BJ reminded him.

So they were ready. Bailey grabbed the kite in his mouth and ran across the yard. The wind lifted him and he was flying free, without a string.

He rose into the night. The house quickly became a small, dark, rectangle among many other rectangles illuminated by the Moon. Though near his small dark rectangle was a blue, aqueous light, shaped like a kidney bean, that blinked on and off.

Bailey could see streetlights, and, as he got higher, masses of lights that he knew were shopping plazas and malls. Still higher he went. Then he saw a silver, shimmering light in the distance. As much as he wanted to go straight to the Moon, the beautiful shimmering drew him, and he turned and flew that way, the wind whipping at his beagle ears.

It was the ocean, reflecting the moonlight. The light spread out beneath him, rippled by the waves. It was one of the most beautiful things Bailey had ever seen.

But this wasn't getting him to the Moon! So he resumed climbing. There were no clouds, and as he flew he glanced down. The shoreline got smaller and smaller. But, as high as he flew, the Moon didn't get any bigger. He didn't seem to be getting any closer at all. And then the ground stopped getting smaller. He had climbed as high as the wind would take him, and he knew he wasn't even close to the Moon.

He continued to fly at that great height, gazing at the Moon with a sad longing that you will only ever see on the face of a beagle. (Usually one who is yearning for food.)

Then he noticed a noise that was getting louder. He brought the kite around and saw, coming toward him, at a little lower altitude, a HUGE jet with four engines under the wings.

The jet roared beneath him, and suddenly the air was in turmoil and Bailey and his kite tumbled over and over, wildly out of control!

Bailey hung on for dear life, but he knew he was falling – falling and tumbling and tumbling and falling! He had to regain control! He twisted the kite to steer against the tumbling. Whichever way the kite tumbled, Bailey steered the opposite way. Finally the kite leveled out.

Bailey had lost a lot of altitude. He could see houses and cars on the ground. He flew until he saw a swimming pool that was blinking on and off, and swooped down for another dizzying landing.

“You’ll never be able to do it,” said BJ, after she had been told what happened, “and that jet could have killed you! You got caught in the slipstream! I read about it in Junior’s science book.” (BJ had just learned to read, and devoured any reading material that was left on the floor, which meant she was well acquainted with Junior’s schoolbooks.)

But it’s the nature of beagles to never give up, and Bailey was not discouraged. In fact, Bailey had never once been discouraged in his entire life. For the next few days, even when he was chasing squirrels or investigating smells in the hibiscus bushes, he was thinking furiously.

Several evenings later, he and BJ were watching television with their people, when Bailey looked around and then said quietly, "Come with me. I've got something I want to show you."

They padded off to Junior's bedroom. As usual, the floor was littered with clothes, candy wrappers, school papers, and even the pillow from Junior's bed. Bailey pawed through the clothes and uncovered Junior's *General Science* schoolbook.

He flipped open the cover with his nose and pawed through the pages. He pawed forward. After a while he pawed back. He pawed back and forth. "They should mark each chapter with a different scent!" he exclaimed. "I don't know how humans find anything in these books!"

"Considering Junior's grades," said BJ, "I don't think he does."

Then Bailey found the page he was looking for. It was a chapter on aeronautics, and there was a picture of a plane in a wind tunnel, with smoke streaming around it.

BJ said, "That's the slipstream I was talking about."

"I know. I've been reading about it. Look here. The smoke shows that the wind shoots up the tail and up into the air. If I could steer my kite into that wind, the slipstream would shoot me straight up, and I'll bet that would be the boost I'd need to get to the Moon!"

"Yes, yes!" cried BJ, and she scampered around and caught one of Junior's school papers in her mouth and quickly tore it to shreds. "To the Moon! Let's do it now."

“No,” said Bailey, “It’s too late tonight. I’ll try tomorrow. Tomorrow night, you know, the Moon will be full....”

The next night Bailey and BJ scratched on the door and were let out into the yard. They stopped for an instant to look at the Moon. It was indeed full, and magnificent in the cloudless sky. It was so bright, they could see everything in the yard clearly. BJ ran over and got the kite out from behind the shed. Bailey bounded up behind her. They paused for less than a second – that’s as solemn as beagles can be at historic moments – and then Bailey took up the kite and ran across the yard, looking for the wind.

He found it, and lifted off with the surefootedness of the experienced aviator he had become. Up he went, as fast as he could go. The sights below didn’t interest him any more. He was on his way to the Moon.

He headed towards the ocean, gaining altitude. He knew that the giant jet with the four engines would be in the same place at the same time as before, and he was going to be there to meet it.

He reached maximum altitude. He glanced down. He was over the shoreline – it seemed like the right spot. He waited.

While he waited, he looked one more time at the Moon. His tail began to wag. Wag wag wag! He couldn’t help it. The Moon!

And then he heard the roar of the approaching jet. It was the same one! He was a little above it. He steered around so it was coming straight at him. He lined the plane’s nose up with its tail. He knew that if he got the angle wrong, he would just be tossed off to the side.

The jet roared closer. It was moving at incredible speed. It was time to dive! Bailey twisted the crossbar of his kite, the air spilled out from the box panels, and he dove right down at the nose of the jet!

As he pulled up he had only a split second to glimpse startled expressions on the pilot and copilot before he ZOOMED down the length of the jet in the blink of an eye and then there was the tail and he pulled up on the kite and then...

...He was SHOOTING through the air so fast that his ears were plastered back on his head and his eyes watered so badly that he had to close them.

But it didn't feel like he was falling. No, it didn't feel like that at all. Eventually he opened his eyes, blinked a few times, and looked down. He saw... well, he saw the ground, he supposed, but it didn't look like the ground he had seen on earlier flights. He couldn't see any streetlights or malls. Nothing looked familiar, except... maybe... was that shape of the Florida peninsula? And was *that* the outline of the southeastern United States? Well, heck, was that the outline of the *whole* United States?

Bailey looked up, and there was the Moon. And the Moon was closer. *Definitely* closer.

He was on his way to the Moon!

Bailey steered his kite straight and true, always on course toward the Moon. The Earth receded behind him, becoming first a huge blue beach ball, and then smaller and smaller until it was an exquisite (Bailey was a smart beagle who knew what "exquisite" meant) blue marble.

At the same time the Moon grew and grew, brilliantly silver-white, with sharp black shadows streaked across its face. It grew until it was all he could see ahead. He could make out mountains and valleys, and big dark plains. He could see craters that looked just like his food and water bowls back on Earth. The mountains seemed to grow taller and taller, and the craters deeper and deeper, and Bailey knew it was about time he arrived.

He steered his kite so he'd approach at an angle and roll to a landing, just as he had on Earth. But he was moving at an unbelievable speed. First the tips of mountains ZOOMED past, and then he ZOOMED by giant ridges, and then ZOOM -- rims of craters. He was losing altitude, but he had never landed this fast before. The ground whizzed beneath in a blur. A long field of what looked like smooth dust raced up and he knew that was his best bet so he guided his kite and hit the surface! A plume of dust shot up and he and the kite rolled faster and longer than they had ever rolled before.

And then they stopped.

Bailey stumbled out. "Stumbled" isn't even the word for it. He was dizzier than he'd had ever believed was possible. His left front leg moved in front of his right rear paw while his right rear leg crossed his left rear leg while he wasn't even sure how many legs he had but he knew that it was more than he was supposed to have.

He suddenly flopped on his back with all paws in the air. Above him the stars and the blue Earth marble spun so fast that he wanted to heave his dinner.

But a beagle loves his dinner, so Bailey shut his eyes tight and willed his dinner down and after a while...

...it seemed safe to open his eyes again.

The stars took a few more spins, and then the realization hit him: HE WAS ON THE MOON! He had done it!

He wagged his paws and flipped over to be on all fours! But his flip carried him up in the air, and when “all fours” were beneath him he was nowhere near the ground.

“The gravity here is less,” he remembered. The momentum of his flip carried him over on his back again, so that when he landed his paws were extended straight up in the air, for what would have been a perfect touchdown back on Earth. A little cloud of Moon dust rose around him, and drifted slowly down.

“Need to get used to this,” he thought, and carefully scrambled to his feet.

He was standing in a gray and white desert. There were only mountains, rocks, and dust for as far as he could see. And his kite, his bright red kite, was wrecked. The wooden struts and spars were broken, and the red fabric torn, probably from an encounter with a sharp rock during the landing.

But of course Bailey wasn't discouraged – Bailey was never discouraged. and HE WAS ON THE MOON. He left the kite behind, and trotted off to explore. With each trot he flew in the air and descended slowly. His legs pumped as he tried to take the next step before he was down. But the thing he found most strange was his ears: On Earth, they would slap against the sides of his head

when he ran. Here, they descended in a slowed motion that somehow threw off his gait. As though on Earth he had unknowingly counted on the slapping of his ears to set his pace.

“This is going to take some *real* getting used to,” he thought, as he came to a big boulder. He jumped, clearing it easily.

“Wow!” he thought, “if I could jump like this back home, I’d be able to get food off the kitchen counter with no problem!”

He put his nose to the ground and started sniffing. His first sniff brought in a snoutfull of Moon dust, and he sneezed it back out. He sniffed again. He trotted, and then bounded back and forth, as he got the hang of the gravity, up onto ledges and down into ravines, sniffing and sniffing. But there were no smells to smell. No lizards, cats, squirrels, or raccoons. Nothing at all. This Moon was really quite uninteresting.

Bailey sat down. No smells to smell. No one to play with. Great jumping but no kitchen counters to get things from. He scratched behind one ear. Face it: The Moon was *boring*.

And beagles don’t like to be bored. Bailey was happy to be the first Earthling on the Moon, but now that he was here, there didn’t seem to be much else to do except go home.

He looked at the blue and white Earth in the Moon’s sky. It was beautiful. That was the only thing the Moon had going for it: A great view of Earth.

Just then Bailey saw a flash, and something shot over his head and disappeared over a low ridge. He bounded off to see what it was.

He flew up the ridge – almost literally in the low gravity – and when he reached the top he looked down, and saw that what had flashed over his head was the humans' spaceship. The one he had seen so many times on television. It'd landed on the plain below.

Bailey bounced down the other side of the ridge (taking a few tumbles in the process – going downhill in low gravity was for some reason trickier than going uphill) and across the plain. When he was near the spaceship, he peered over a boulder.

The astronauts were just climbing down the ladder. They were wearing fat, bulky spacesuits that made them look ridiculous. They had to hop instead of walk, and it made Bailey laugh.

He was going to run over and jump on them and welcome them to the Moon... but then he had a thought. These astronauts were his ticket home, since his kite was wrecked, and *they* thought they were the first ones here. If they found out that they had been beaten to the Moon by a beagle, they might not be happy. They might think they had spent all their money and come all this way for nothing. Bailey knew what humans could be like when they weren't happy. Humans weren't eternally cheerful, like beagles.

So he just watched. The astronauts planted a flag, and took pictures of each other. Then they picked up rocks and dropped them into what looked like a cooler. (Bailey wondered why they needed to keep the rocks cold.) He waited until they were distracted by an especially interesting rock, and then he dashed

over to the spaceship. He climbed the ladder – easy in the low gravity – and slipped through the airlock into the ship.

Once inside, he hid behind a piece of equipment whose purpose he could not even guess at. After a while he heard the astronauts in the airlock. They were coming inside, pushing their cooler of rocks ahead of them.

They took off their helmets, and then one of them flipped a switch on a control panel.

“I’ve turned off the radio,” he said.

“I can’t believe it, Neil,” said the other astronaut, “I just can’t believe it!”

“Buzz,” said Neil, “you will never, *ever say anything to anyone* about this. *Ever*. They’ll just think we were crazy.”

“I know,” said Buzz. “You’re right. On the one hand I’d swear that those were a dog’s pawprints in the Moon dust running up to the LEM. But on the other hand I don’t even believe it myself.”

“Just don’t *ever say anything to anyone*.”

And then Neil switched the radio back on.

After a while the spaceship blasted off from the Moon’s surface, and joined with another spaceship that was in orbit overhead. There was another astronaut waiting there. His name seemed to be Mike. Then they started back for Earth. Bailey hid inside a boot from one of the Moon suits. (Luckily for him, either Neil or Buzz had big feet.) It looked to Bailey as though the human spaceship was going to take a lot longer to make the trip than his kite. Later the astronauts fell asleep, and Bailey came out from his boot.

He was weightless! THIS WAS COOL! He bounced from wall to wall, pushing off with his paws and rotating in mid-air to push off from the next surface. He could feel his ears floating by the sides of his head. When he wagged his tail, his whole body wagged the other way, and he danced a silly beagle dance.

Then he helped himself to some food and water that he was sure the astronauts would never miss. Later, he looked out the spaceship's window. He could see the Moon behind them. Turning his head he could see the Earth that they were approaching. Everything was perfectly silent.

He crawled back into the boot before the astronauts woke up. Later, they prepared the spaceship for landing. Bailey knew (from television) that the part of the ship that had been on the Moon would not return to Earth, so he had to hide in the "capsule" part. He managed to squeeze in behind the cooler of Moon rocks.

The humans' spaceship landed by simply opening a parachute and floating down into the ocean. It was not exciting or adventurous at all. Nothing like landing in Bailey's kite.

After it landed, the capsule was carried to a big Navy ship. The astronauts were locked up in a trailer – bummer for them! Bailey slipped out of the capsule, took a quick sniff around, and found a place to hide, not far from the capsule. He helped himself to a couple of sandwiches that he found and was sure no one would miss.

Then Bailey heard two sailors talking about the capsule: It was going to be flown to "the Space Center."

“The Space Center!” thought Bailey. “That’s near where I live.” So when no one was looking he hopped back inside. Later, he could feel the capsule rock as it was loaded onto a plane.

It was a long flight back to Florida. Bailey slept most of the way, curled up on one of the astronauts’ couches. He woke up when the capsule was jostled. He jumped up and looked out one of the tiny windows, and sure enough he could see flat land covered with palm trees and palmetto bushes. He was home in Florida. The sun was shining brightly.

The hatch of the capsule opened, and before you could say “Boo!” Bailey shot out the door and past the men who were standing there.

“Hey! What was that?” a startled voice said, but Bailey just ran as fast as he could. But before he got too far away to hear, a different voice back at the capsule said, “You will never, *ever say anything to anyone* about this. *Ever.*”

How Bailey covered the last few miles to his home doesn’t add anything to this story. Dogs have a great sense of direction, and Bailey was resourceful, and so one morning he turned up on the doormat in front of his house. His people made a great fuss, and seemed *terribly* relieved that he was home, but he didn’t understand why. He had just been doing something he needed to do, and had never been in any danger.

Later he and BJ went out into the yard.

“So where have you been?” BJ asked angrily. “I blinked and blinked the pool for hours! And you’ve been gone for days!”

“*BJ*,” said Bailey, as though it were a perfectly stupid question, “I’ve been *to the Moon.*”

“You have?” BJ cried! “To the Moon?” She pranced around. “How grand! What was it like? Can I go someday?”

Bailey put his nose to the ground and sniffed for smells. His snout immediately filled with the rich scent of a squirrel that had crossed this spot the night before.

“You wouldn’t want to go,” he said. “It’s *boring.*”

THE END