

- Peachy - - and Keen -

A SCHOOL TAIL

by Jason Tharp

and J. B. Rose



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Dedicated to my fellow dreamers:
Chase massive dreams,
practice when others would give up,
and be yourself, 'cause you're purrfect!



Be the weird YOU want
to see in the world!

—Jason



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A Doggone Good Idea



“Keen? Helloooo, Earth to Keen!” Peachy the cat poked a tiny dog in a dinosaur costume.

“RAWRRRRRR!” Keen jumped, startled. “Peachy, you scared me!”

“Were you daydreaming about cookies again?” Peachy asked.

“Umm,” said Keen, “no?”

“Keen?”

“Well, okay, maybe,” Keen admitted. “But you know how hungry I get after . . . *anything*. And today was the first day of school so I’m EXTRA hungry!”

Peachy laughed like it was perfectly normal to talk about chocolate-chip daydreams with a doggy in a

dinosaur costume. Because when you were best friends with Keen—it was.

Peachy and Keen had been purrfect pals ever since they were little. Peachy was a cool, collected kitty, while Keen was, well, hungry. Keen was a friendly furball with a love of costumes and an even greater love of food. But while most of the cats and dogs at school didn't usually get along, somehow Peachy and Keen just worked.

"Well, you can daydream about chocolate-chip dog biscuits later." Peachy pulled Keen down the hall. "We have to go sign up for the school newspaper!"



“Aw, Peachy,” Keen groaned. “Why do we have to join the *Happy Tails Times*? The students only read that paper when they want a good catnap.”

“That’s not true,” Peachy said. “Besides, it’s been my dream to write for the paper ever since . . . fur-ever! And this year, we’re finally old enough to join.”



Peachy pictured herself walking the halls with a notepad, wearing a fancy press badge to show everyone just how super important her writing was.

“My aunt was the star reporter when she was a student here,” Peachy chattered on. “She covered all sorts of amazing stories. The Great Catscape, The Cow Who Cried Wolf, even Waterfowl Gate!”



“ZZZZZZZZ.” Keen pretended to snore.

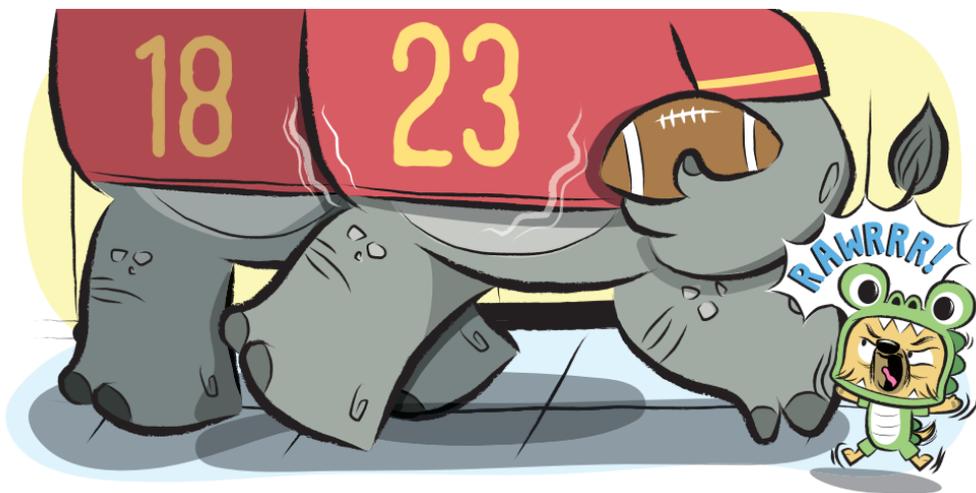
“Keen!” Peachy exclaimed.

“Sorry,” Keen said. “But just thinking about it makes me dog-tired!”

“Well, then do it for me, as your best friend,” Peachy pleaded.

The pair hurried down the crowded hallway. Classes had just finished, and the hall was full of students on their way to different after-school activities. Keen was smaller than most animals, so he had to keep dodging the bigger students to avoid getting smooshed.

“Watch it!” Keen exclaimed when two football-player rhinos almost stepped on his tail. “RAWRRR!” He let out his most impressive dinosaur growl.



“Did you hear something?” one rhino asked the other.

“Must have been my stomach.” The second rhino patted his belly. “They were serving bug-ritos for lunch today. *URP!*”

Keen turned around. Gross!



Peachy was already at the far end of the hall. Keen sprinted to catch up. Peachy was chattering away like she hadn't even noticed he'd been missing. “. . . And I'm just so excited to write something really cool. You know, an article that will make a big difference in the school! I have tons of ideas. I've—” Peachy stopped very suddenly, causing Keen to run into her.

“Oof! Fuzzy furballs, Peachy.” Keen rubbed his nose. “Why'd you stop?”

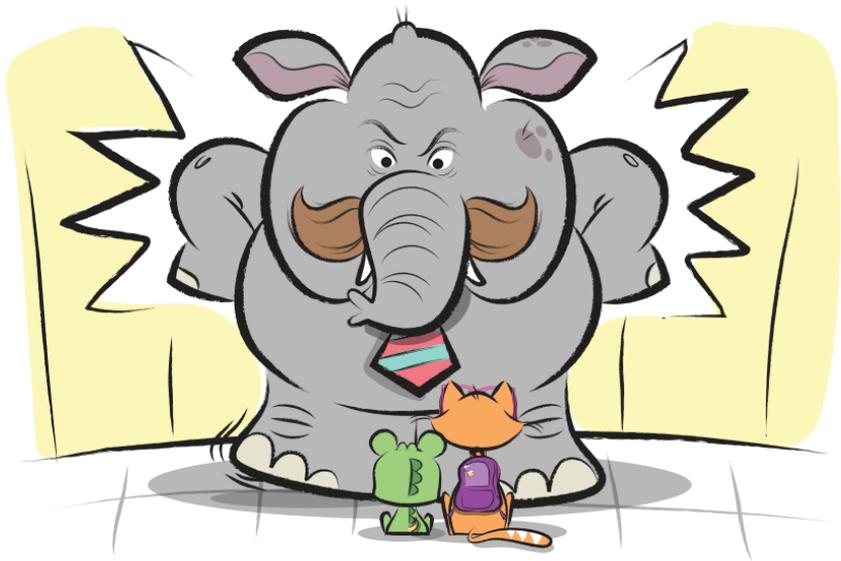
“I don’t understand,” Peachy said, confused. “This is the room where the newspaper meets. But it looks like no one is in here. Are we early?”



“Not exactly,” a stern voice said behind them.

Peachy and Keen turned to see a giant elephant: Principal Trunx. He was famous at Happy Tails School for two things: his love of peanuts, and his love of the *rules*. Right now, Principal Trunx was staring down his trunk at them with his arms crossed.

“I’m afraid the *Happy Tails Times* is no more,” he said.



Peachy was shocked. “What! Why?”

“We shut it down,” Principal Trunx said, “due to a lack of interest.”

“But . . . but that can’t be true!” Peachy exclaimed. “It’s been my dream to join the paper ever since I was a kitten. My aunt used to be the star reporter when she was a student here.”

“Oh, I remember your aunt, Miss . . . Peachy, is it?” Principal Trunx narrowed his eyes. “Your aunt was *Purrfect Priscilla*. Always getting the big scoops. Leaving the rest of us to report on doggy doo-doo.”

Peachy hadn’t realized Principal Trunx and her aunt had been students at Happy Tails School together. But it didn’t sound like they’d gotten along.

“Well, times have changed,” Principal Trunx continued. “No one reads the paper anymore. And the *Happy Tails Handbook* specifically states that any school club with a lack of interest must be shut down.”

“But how are students supposed to know what’s happening around school?” Peachy insisted. “And how else am I supposed to become a star reporter?”



“I suggest you find a new hobby,” Principal Trunx said brusquely. “One that doesn’t follow in the paw prints of your aunt. Besides, the only things you hyper little fur-balls care about these days are your fancy gadgets with the texting and the Chimpstagram and whatever-you-call-it—”

Just then, a *BING* came from Keen's pocket. Keen reached for his PinePhone and giggled at something he saw on the screen. Peachy elbowed him to pay attention.

"You'll have to find something else to do," Principal Trunx finished. "Both of you!"



The principal stared at them awkwardly until Peachy and Keen slowly made their way down the hall.

"It's okay, Peachy," Keen said as soon as they were out of earshot. "Don't let Principal Cranky-Trunks get you down. At least now we can go for an after-school snack. I'm as hungry as a horse! And that's saying something. Oh, oh! Let's go to Pizza Mutt! No, no. McDonkey's? No! Nibbles 'n' Bits! What do you think is

the Cookie of the Day? I hope it's Maple-Bacon Bash. No, Peanut Butter Bash. No, Choco-Chunk. No, no! Definitely Maple-Bacon—”

“I just can't believe there's no more paper,” Peachy interrupted. “Just like that—something I've been looking forward to since fur-ever is . . . gone.”

“Hey, I know it's rough,” Keen said. “But cheer up! There are lots of other things we can do.” Keen hopped around her, wagging his tail. “We could go play chase-the-tennis-ball-and-never-bring-it-back! Or practice our *RAWRS* at strangers passing the window! Or . . .”



“And what does Principal Trunx mean, ‘no one reads the newspaper?’” She mimicked the principal’s deep voice. “It’s almost like he’s *happy* the *Happy Tails Times* is shut down. There has to be a way to get students more excited about the school news!”

Suddenly, another *BING* came from Keen’s PinePhone.

“Woo-hoo!” he cheered, looking at the screen.



“There’s going to be a new episode of *Hot Diggity Dog* tonight!”

As Peachy watched Keen on his phone, an idea started to come to her. “Wait . . .” she said. “Where are you reading that?”

“It’s from a Hot Diggity Dog fan website,” said Keen. “It sends updates to me when there’s news about the show! It says in the episode tonight, Hot Diggity Dog captures the town bank robber with a lasso made out of bacon—”

Peachy’s idea was growing. “News, you say?” she asked with a smile.

“Uh-huh . . .” Keen gave her a weird look. “Okay, so, are we going to Nibbles ’n’ Bits or what? C’mon, c’mon, c’mon!”

But Peachy wasn’t listening. She had just thought of a super-awesome, totally amazing, brilliant idea!

