

UNDER THE WEATHER • SICK AS A DOG

By Carole L. Cooney

In the 1700's, many people traveled by boat. Because of stormy weather and rough seas, many people got sick. They were said to be suffering from the effects of the bad weather. Soon the phrase "under the weather" came to mean a person who is sick.

As early as the 1500's, the use of dogs in idioms was very popular. Here are some of the familiar ones: "going to the dogs," "in the dog house," and "raining cats and dogs." Because dogs are common family pets that often eat things they shouldn't and get sick, it is a good choice to use "dog" in the idiom, "sick as a dog."

Setting: The Bright Light Circus

Characters:

Narrator

Smiley, a clown

Clara, a clown

Tiny Toes, Smiley's dog

Narrator: The Bright Light Circus had just finished setting up the big tent, when a flash of lightning struck in the distance. There had been many storms this season and it didn't look hopeful that the show would open tonight as planned.

Smiley: Wow! Clara, did you see that streak of lightning? I wonder if many folks will be coming out tonight.

Clara: Just keep your happy face on, Smiley, and everything will turn out just fine.

Narrator: There was a loud bark from the back of the tent. Tiny Toes was being feisty. He didn't like thunder and lightning and he made sure everyone knew it.

Tiny Toes: Grrr... Woof, woof. Stop making such a racket up there. Can't you see I'm trying to catch a few winks!

Narrator: Over the loud speaker, Captain Jack gave the performers the day's schedule.

Smiley: Okay, Clara, let's practice the chase*. When I toot my horn once, that'll be the signal for you to run the other way. Two toots means run into the audience.

Clara: Wait a minute, Smiley. You don't look so good. Are you feeling okay?

Smiley: Oh, it's nothing. I'm just a little "under the weather."

Clara: Your face is sweating. I bet you have a temperature.

Smiley: Aw, it's nothing. I probably ate something at breakfast that's upset my stomach. Come on. Let's get into the ring and practice.

Narrator: Clara and Smiley began their routine by waltzing together with enormously big steps. Around and around they went until they quickly broke apart and started the chase. Clara was in the lead skipping around the hippodrome track* and singing at the top of her lungs.

Clara: (singing) Time to toot! Rooty, toot, toot! Time to toot! Rooty, toot, toot!

Narrator: Clara suddenly stopped skipping.

Clara: Hey! Where are the toots, Smiley?

Narrator: Clara turned around and saw Smiley on the floor with Tiny Toes licking his face.

Clara: Smiley, Smiley! What's going on? You look as "sick as a dog!"

Tiny Toes: Woof, Woof! Stop your whining, Clara and come over and help.

Smiley: (groaning) Oh... oooh... oooh...

Clara: (slowly) Smiley, I think you need to see the doctor.

Narrator: Tiny Toes was dancing up and down. Then he raced over to Clara and tugged on her clown pants. Clara slowly tiptoed over to where Smiley lay and stooped down. In a flash, Smiley jumped up and twirled her around.

Clara: Ah! You tricked me, Smiley. Where's my broom? WHERE IS MY BROOM!

Narrator: Tiny Toes ran over to the edge of the hippodrome track, grabbed a teeny-tiny broom in his mouth and raced back to Clara.

Clara: Let's see who is tooting now!

Narrator: Clara lifted the teeny-tiny broom high and started the chase after Smiley.

Smiley: (laughing wildly) Ha, ha, ha! Clara. Toot!

Clara: You're not going to fool me again. Toot all you want but I'm going to get even with you! Come on Tiny Toes. Help me get Smiley. Then we'll tickle him until he cries "Uncle!"

Narrator: And that's just what happened. Tiny Toes grabbed onto Smiley's clown's pants and tugged this way and that. Meanwhile, Clara pushed Smiley onto the floor and tickled him with her teeny-tiny broom.

Smiley: (begging) All right, Clara. (laughing) Hee, hee, hee. Stop, please stop. Okay, "UNCLE!"

Narrator: The tickling stopped.

Smiley: I'm sorry I played tricks on you, Clara, but what just happened was really funny.

Clara: Shall we keep it in our clown act tonight? I think it was hysterical with Tiny Toes jumping all over the place as if he was in charge.

Smiley: All right! That sounds like a plan.

Clara: Oh, no! Is that rain beating on the tent top? It sure is coming down hard.

Smiley: Where's Tiny Toes? You know how easily he gets a chill from the rain. That would mean he'd be "under the weather" and "sick as a dog!"

Narrator: Later, the rain stopped. The audience came. The show went on and Smiley, Clara and Tiny Toes' clown act was the night's biggest hit!

*Chase: a quick run around the Hippodrome track, with one clown chasing another clown.

*Hippodrome track: the oval area between the rings and the audience.