

NICK & KNOBBY IN THE DARING ESCAPE

By Felix Mayerhofer

Chapter 1: Show Biz

“**N**ick! A registered letter just arrived for you,” called Mrs. Kincade. “It’s from CBC TV in New York.” *What could it be?* she wondered, as she handed the letter to her son. *Could it have something to do with Nick and Knobby’s recent performance on local TV?*

Nick excitedly ripped open the letter. Reading it quickly, he yelled, “Mom! They want us to perform on a TV Special, featuring different animal acts. Our local TV station sent them a video of our performance. The producers at CBC think the Nick and Knobby Bass Drum Act will be perfect for their show.”

Their act was different because Knobby played the bass drum with his drumstick-like tail, with incredible rhythms, soft and loud.

“I can’t believe it!” exclaimed Nick. “The whole country will see us! They’re going to rehearse and tape the show before a live audience in New York City.”

“Oh! Nick, what a wonderful opportunity for you and Knobby,” said his mom.

He and Knobby practiced hard for hours. All Nick could think about was the TV show. When the day he had been waiting for finally arrived, they were both up at the crack of dawn and raring to go.

Nick helped his father load the two bass drums and the electronic equipment into the van. The family then belted themselves in for the long drive to the “Big City.”

Upon their arrival, they checked into a hotel and left for the studio. As they walked onto the TV set, a thin, nervous little man paced the floor. In a high pitched voice, he shouted, “I want all the acts on stage, immediately!” The animals and their trainers stampeded onto the set. It was a zoo! Knobby went wild, as he ran in, out, and around all the animals.

“Don’t run Knobby!” Nick pleaded, as he held Knobby by the collar trying to keep him under control.

Mr. Renee, the artistic director, flitted around the stage faster than a “flea in hot sand.”

“Attention, everyone!” he ordered, clapping his hands.

Knobby banged his tail on the floor.

“QUIET!” He demanded, stomping his foot.

Clapping his hands once more, Mr. Renee screamed, “Where’s the camera crew?”

As the crew scampered onto the stage, Knobby’s tail accidentally hooked tails with a screeching monkey.

Mr. Renee clapped his hands and pointed a long, bony finger of warning at Knobby.

“Knobby, what am I going to do with you?” Nick said, as he untangled the tails.

Poor Knobby just couldn’t control himself. It felt like the old act being around animals again. He cocked his head curiously at the trained seal. He let out a happy yip when the seal smacked his flippers together.

Knobby was all eyes as the seal twirled a ball on his nose.

When the seal blew a rubber-balled horn, Knobby answered by hitting his tail against the bass drum with a big boom.

The seal honked his horn again.

Knobby responded with another boom.

Mr. Renee was a wreck and threatened Nick, “This is the last time I’m going to warn you about that dog!” Nick was relieved when it was their turn to rehearse. The camera crew laughed as they watched the dog with the funny looking tail play the bass drum.

Chapter 2: Cat-Man

When the rehearsal ended that evening, Nick said, “Knobby, I’ve had it with you. I’m glad we’re going back to the hotel.”

Nick was totally exhausted as he crawled into bed. At that very moment, Knobby dashed for his leash. Carrying it across the room he dropped it on Nick’s bed.

“Oh, no,” groaned Nick. He knew exactly what Knobby wanted. “I’d better take him out,” he said to his dad.

“I’ll go with you,” answered his father.

“You don’t have to,” replied Nick. “We’ll just go in front of the hotel. We’ll be okay.”

Nick went down the elevator with an excited Knobby on the leash. As they left the hotel, the loud MEOW of a cat caught Knobby’s attention, and he dashed towards the sound.

“Wait!” yelled Nick, as Knobby dragged him into a dimly lit alley at the side of the hotel. There was no cat in sight, but Knobby settled for a big, yellow fire hydrant.

As they were about to return to their room, a large, tall man stepped out of the dark.

“Keep a tight hold on that dog kid and don’t move! I’m the cat you’re looking for.”

Knobby growled deep in his throat. Nick, seeing a large bulge in the man’s pocket, thought he had a gun!

Holding Knobby back, Nick said, “Stay! Knobby,” and Knobby obeyed.

The man threw a laundry bag at Nick and ordered, “Put your dog in the bag!” An unwilling Nick did as he was told.

“Sorry old dog,” he said, as he put a squirming Knobby in the bag.

“Pick up the bag and let’s go!” the man said.

Carrying the heavy bag with Knobby inside, Nick was pushed from behind.

“Give me the bag and get in the elevator!” snarled the kidnaper.

It was a service elevator used only during the day for deliveries. They rode up to the 5th floor, one floor above where Nick and his parents were staying.

Looking down the hall both ways, the kidnaper shoved Nick out the elevator and into a nearby room.

The man had Nick attach Knobby’s leash to the bedpost. Handing him a damp cloth with a strong odor, he said, “Here, take this, and put your dog to sleep!”

“I won’t drug Knobby!” Nick yelled.

“You will if you want your dog to live,” warned the man.

Nick gently put the drugged cloth to Knobby’s nose and Knobby fell limply to the floor.

As the kidnaper tied Nick to a chair, he said in a threatening voice, “Don’t you dare make a sound!”

Chapter 3: Chewing For Life

Downstairs, Nick's parents were concerned when he didn't come out of the alley. His father and the hotel security guard ran to the side of the hotel, but found no trace of him

They immediately called the police, who raced to the scene within minutes and came to a screeching halt in front of the hotel.

"I was watching my son and his dog from the balcony," a frantic Mr. Kincade told the policeman. "They entered the alley and never came out." As Mr. Kincade answered the policeman's questions, the kidnaper calmly walked by them. He was leaving the hotel to use an outside telephone.

When Nick's folks returned to their room the phone was ringing. It was the kidnaper.

"Get one hundred thousand dollars in small bills by tomorrow, if you ever want to see your kid and his dog again," he threatened. The phone suddenly went dead. Mr. and Mrs. Kincade looked at each other in stunned silence.

Back in the kidnaper's room, Nick was frightened. Who would want to kidnap us? he asked himself over and over.

When the man returned to the room, he said to Nick, "I demanded a large ransom from your parents, and I'm sure they'll pay it."

Nick softly replied, "We're not rich."

The man laughed, and said, "I'm not stupid. You and your dog are going to be on TV. I saw your picture in the newspaper and the kidnap idea hit me. You've got to be worth a lot of money."

"I checked in at this hotel because they'd never think of looking for you here. Knowing your dog would have to come out sooner or later, I watched the hotel entrance from the alley."

Nick shook his head in disbelief. He could see from the look in the man's eyes that he was crazy. He just rambled on and on.

When the kidnaper finally left the room, Nick looked around for a way to escape. Tired from lack of sleep he dozed off and on all night. He could hear the man snoring in the next room, so he knew they weren't alone.

I feel terrible, Nick said to himself, as the first rays of morning light appeared. My eyes are swollen, and I don't think I can stand the pain in my wrists much longer.

That's it! My wrists! Knobby! Get up! Knobby was still groggy from the drug but he slowly stood up.

Nick turned the back of his chair towards Knobby. He put his tied wrists into Knobby's mouth and Knobby understood what he had to do. He started chewing the rope.

"Good dog!" said Nick.

Chapter: 4 Tail With A Punch

Meanwhile, the news had spread like wildfire about the kidnapping. There was chaos at the hotel. The police, newspaper reporters, and TV cameras were everywhere. There was widespread interest in Knobby and Nick because of the publicity about their unusual act.

In their room, Nick's parents anxiously waited for further instructions from the kidnaper.

"We have a lead on the alleged identity of the kidnaper," said Sergeant Klew, the detective in charge. "He was just released on parole and has been seen in this area. We've sent his picture to all the precincts."

At the studio, Mr. Renee was a nervous wreck. He couldn't stall for time much longer. The audience and the animals were getting restless.

He told his crew to get ready! "We'll begin taping in half an hour with or without Knobby and Nick," he said.

The camera crew felt sad. They had grown to love that dog with the long tail who made them laugh. It just wouldn't be as good without them.

Back at the hideout, Knobby was slowly chewing through the rope. Nick could feel the rope getting looser. They heard movement from the kidnaper's room. The snoring stopped. A shuffling sound approached their door. Nick quickly turned his chair around.

He said quietly, "Lay down Knobby!" and Knobby obeyed. The kidnaper walked in and looked around. Thinking they were still asleep, he left. Nick heard the outside door close. He and Knobby were alone at last.

"Okay Knobby, let's get these ropes off," Nick said, as he again put his wrists against Knobby's mouth. Knobby began chewing at break neck speed, as he was now wide awake and ready to go for his morning walk.

The kidnaper called Nick's parents and gave them the instructions for the money drop.

He warned them, "No funny business or you'll never see your kid again!"

In the kidnaper's back room, Knobby had finally chewed through the rope. Nick untied his ankles and then Knobby's leash. Knobby ran around the room happy with his newfound freedom.

The outside door opened and Nick said, "Quiet Knobby!"

The kidnaper was back.

Knobby let out a low growl.

Nick wanted to escape, but there was no way out.

As the footsteps came closer Knobby jumped onto the big bureau next to the door. The door opened. The man walked in and Knobby whacked him on the bridge of the nose. His stiff tail, strong from playing the bass drum, stunned and blinded the kidnaper. The man let out a scream, grabbed his nose in pain and collapsed to the floor.

Nick jumped out of his chair and yelled, "Let's get out of here, Knobby!" Leaping over the man, they ran for their lives. They

scampered into the adjoining room and burst through the door into the hall.

Crashing into two policemen who were patrolling the hotel, Nick yelled, "We're Knobby and Nick, and the kidnaper is inside!"

At that moment, the kidnaper staggered into the hallway. The police recognized him immediately from his pictures.

"You're under arrest," they said, as they handcuffed him and read him his rights.

Knobby and Nick ran down the stairs and burst into his parent's room.

"Nick!" they screamed, hugging him tightly and crying with joy. Knobby bounced up and down like a jumping Jack giving everyone loving licks.

Nick quickly told them and Detective Klew the whole story. Knobby gave Nick a little nudge with his nose and Nick knew what that meant.

"Okay you little rascal." Nick said. "You deserve to go out."

Chapter 5: Knobby Flips

After he and his folks walked Knobby, Detective Klew drove them to the TV studio with lights flashing and sirens blaring.

When the police car stopped in front of CBC Studio, Nick and Knobby ran in to the applause of the audience and the camera crew.

Mr. Renee happily clapped his hands. “We’re saved!” he said, as he saw Nick and Knobby running down the aisle. The show was already in progress, so the both of them quietly watched the other animals perform their acts. The boy and his dog were exhausted from their frightening experience.

When it was their turn to perform, Mr. Renee came on stage. He explained to the audience what had happened and that Knobby and Nick were still going to perform.

Mr. Renee announced, “I know you’ve all heard the old saying, ‘THE SHOW MUST GO ON’... In that great tradition of the theater, let me present the fantastic duo of Nick and Knobby.”

They opened their act playing on one bass drum with incredible rhythms to the audience’s delight. Nick suddenly switched to his electronic bass drum, playing different sounds, while Knobby continued performing wild rhythms on the regular bass drum.

Ending with a booming and thunderous finish, Nick knew they had never played better. The kidnapping ordeal was over, and he and Knobby could now bask in the glow of a job well done.

Off stage Knobby laid down in exhaustion from both the kidnapping and TV show. From out of nowhere, the seal's large ball came spinning next to Knobby.

Suddenly coming alive, Knobby got up and jumped on the spinning ball like he had seen during his carnival days. To his amazement the ball flipped him high into the air as he came crashing down hard on his tail.

Knobby just lay there, spread-eagled with a strange look on his face. Something was wrong!

"Knobby, are you all right?" asked a worried Nick. Knobby slowly stood up. His beautiful long tail was in the form of a boomerang, with the end bent in a curved shape. Knobby had broken his tail!

He howled like a wolf in the night. Everyone came running to see what had happened.

Nick scooped him up in his arms and said in a choked voice to his parents, "We've got to find a veterinarian right away!" Loading Knobby into the stage manager's van, they sped off to the vets.

"I hope Knobby is going to be all right," Nick said to his parents as he anxiously paced outside the doctor's office. The door opened and out came Knobby, his tail dragging on the floor in a heavy cast. He was one pitiful sight. Nick ran and gave him a big hug.

"Careful!" said the doctor, smiling, "we don't want to break that tail again. Unfortunately, Knobby will have to wear the cast for four weeks, but he will play again."

Hear that Knobby, you're going to be as good as new!

Gently picking up his dog, Nick looked at his parents and said, "Let go home."

COMING SOON: NICK & KNOBBY GO HOLLYWOOD