

# NICK & KNOBBY GO TO HOLLYWOOD

By Felix Mayerhofer

## Chapter 1: The West Coast Comes Calling

“Mom! The Smith’s are outside with their new baby!” Nick yelled, as his mother and father hurried into the room to take a look. The Smith’s lived next door to the Kincade family, and they had only been home from the hospital a couple of days. This was the first time they’d had the baby outside.

“Let’s go see her!” said Nick’s mom.

The proud parents were sitting in comfortable lawn chairs under a big shade tree with Little Katrina in her new rocking cradle.

Knobby, Nick’s dog, ran to Katrina’s cradle and gave her a big lick.

“No! Knobby!” said an embarrassed Nick.

“It’s okay,” responded Mrs. Smith. “We like dogs. We plan to get one for Katrina when she’s a little older.”

Knobby made himself at home, lying as close to the cradle as he could without crawling in. Everyone sat, oohing and aahing over the new baby girl.

Katrina began to cry. Knobby, without moving an inch slipped his tail into the handle of the cradle and began rocking her. The baby stopped crying to everyone's amazement, and they all laughed.

"What a smart dog you are," said Mrs. Smith, scratching Knobby's ears. "You're welcome here anytime."

A few days later the mailman delivered a letter to Nick's house, postmarked HOLLYWOOD!

"Listen to this!" said Mrs. Kincade, as she read the letter to Nick and his father. "Mr. Renee, the director of the animal TV show in which you performed in New York City, is in Hollywood. He's going to direct a movie about a boy and his dog, and the studio thinks you'd both be perfect in the parts."

Having watched the TV tape, the producer would like Nick and Knobby to take a screen test. He wants to see this dog with his own eyes that has a knob on the end of his tail that looks like a drumstick, and plays the bass drum.

"I can't believe it!" yelled Nick. "When do they want us?"

"The studio has enclosed airline tickets for the whole family," replied Mrs. Kincade. "They want us to leave right away!"

Nick excitedly ran outside yelling for Knobby. "Come on Knobby," he shouted, "we're going to Hollywood!"

There was excitement in the air as the Kincade family packed for the trip. "I hope we have everything," said Nick. "The most important

things are our two bass drums and my mallets. Knobby will bring his own tail,” he joked.

Knobby was put into a travel carrier for dogs at the airport and checked through to Hollywood. He was one happy dog when the plane landed and he was free again. As the Kincade family left the terminal, a “stretch” limousine pulled up to the curb to drive them to the studio.

“Wow! We just got to California and already we’re getting the star treatment!” exclaimed Nick.

A local school band struck up a snappy march of welcome as the Kincade family arrived at the studio.

Jumping out of the limousine, Knobby ran to the bass drum and to the drummer’s surprise began playing it with his tail. The kids in the band laughed at his antics and instantly fell in love with him.

## Chapter 2: Knobby Plays Dominoes

Suddenly, Knobby stopped playing as his tail dropped between his legs. There stood Mr. Renee the director. This was the same man who had clapped his hands, stomped his feet, and screamed at him during his recent TV appearance. Mr. Renee walked to the front of the band nervously clapping his hands for attention.

Knobby, running to the back of the band looking for a place to hide, accidentally tripped the tuba player. Like falling dominoes, the tuba player fell forward against the bass drummer, the bass drum banged into the saxophone player, who crashed into the trumpet player, crunching the flute player against the trombone player, whose slide, slid through Mr. Renee's hair.

To everyone's surprise, there dangled Mr. Renee's hair at the end of the trombone slide.

"Let me have that!" screamed a shiny-headed Mr. Renee, as he grabbed his hairpiece and stomped off.

As hard as the band and Kincade family tried they couldn't help themselves. They all burst into laughter!

"Boy, Knobby, I think we're in big trouble!" said Nick, trying hard not to laugh.

The next day Nick and Knobby went to the studio. They were introduced to the famous dog trainer, Mr. Baskerville, who soon became good friends with Knobby.

“Does Knobby know any tricks other than the ones he does in your drum act?” he asked.

“No,” answered Nick.

“I’m going to show him a trick or two to see how fast he responds,” the trainer said.

Within minutes he taught Knobby to roll over and play dead, and it wasn’t long before Mr. Baskerville had Knobby sitting up and begging. Knobby especially liked the juicy treats the trainer was giving him for learning the tricks.

“This dog is easy to teach,” Mr. Baskerville commented, “and he’s a fast learner. What I’m going to do is train Knobby for a fire scene using hand commands. First we’ll go to the movie set and practice without the fire. The Special Effects crew is working on another picture, but they’ll be finished before Knobby’s screen test.”

For several days Mr. Baskerville patiently led Knobby through his part using hand signals.

The script called for Knobby to rescue a baby from a burning house. Working with a doll, Knobby learned to grab the doll by the pajamas and drag it out of the house.

“Knobby is doing very well,” a beaming Mr. Baskerville said to Nick. “Without a doubt he’s ready for the screen test.”

The next morning to everyone’s surprise, Mr. Renee arrived with his cameramen ready to shoot the scene.

## Chapter 3: Meanness In Tinsel Town

Without looking at Knobby, Mr. Renee said, "Take one! Action!"

The cameras started rolling.

Nick and Knobby, as directed, strolled past a house, which the technicians had set on fire. Nick, seeing the fire, yelled "Fire!" Knobby broke away from Nick and bounded towards the front of the house, as Mr. Baskerville gave him a hand signal. With all cameras focused on him--Knobby stopped dead in his tracks!

Mr. Baskerville signaled once more. Knobby couldn't move. This was his first experience with fire and smoke and he was frightened.

"Cut!" screamed an impatient Mr. Renee. "Let's try it again! If that dog doesn't get it, we'll find a dog who will!"

Nick petted a nervous Knobby to calm him down. "It's okay boy," he said, "you'll do fine."

Mr. Baskerville felt terrible. With Mr. Renee deciding to shoot the screen test this very day, he hadn't had time to introduce Knobby to simulated fire. The poor dog didn't have a chance.

With the cameras rolling for a second take, Knobby again reached the front of the house. Mr. Baskerville gave a strong hand signal--and Knobby froze again! He couldn't go through the wall of fire!

"Cut! Cut! Cut!" Mr. Renee shouted with hands flying. "Forget the contract, forget everything, you're through in Hollywood!" he shrieked pointing at Knobby. "I knew you couldn't do it!"

The next day the Kincade family boarded the plane for their return trip. Nick was disappointed that he and Knobby hadn't been given a chance to show what they could really do.

## Chapter 4: Fear in the Night

The minute they arrived home, Knobby ran next door to the Smith's house to see Katrina.

"Knobby! You're back," said Mrs. Smith, who was seated near Katrina. "Wonderful! I'll be able to relax again knowing that you're here to protect the baby."

Knobby began rocking the cradle and felt as if he had never left.

It was a hot muggy first night home as an exhausted Nick opened his bedroom window and crawled into bed. Knobby had already plopped himself on Nick's bed and was fast asleep by the time his master slipped between the sheets. Nick was soon snoring as loud as Knobby.

In the middle of the quiet night, Knobby raised his head, his senses tingling. Something was wrong. Was it a sound or a smell? He thought he heard a pop, a crackling sound, but where? Knobby jumped up and looked through the window. He saw a flickering and stabbing light coming from the Smith's house. It was the same type of light that had stopped him at the studio in Hollywood. The thought of it made him shudder.

Knobby bound out the window and began barking loudly as he ran to the burning house.

"Quiet that dog!" someone yelled, as Knobby barked harder than ever, until lights turned on throughout the neighborhood.

Smoke began to pour out of the house as he heard loud voices and screams come from within. The Smiths came coughing and staggering out of the dense smoke and fell down on the lawn. Nick and his folks arrived just as the Smiths stumbled out of the house. Knobby's barking had awakened the Smiths in the nick of time.

"There was so much smoke we couldn't get to Katrina!" screamed a panicked Mrs. Smith. "Do something!" she begged with tears running down her cheeks. Mr. Smith tried to go back into the house but Mr. Kincade held him back.

"Let me go!" Mr. Smith shouted! "I've got to save our baby!"

From a distance the wail of the approaching fire engines could be heard.

"Wait for the fire department," said Mr. Kincade. "They'll be here in a minute."

"It will be too late!" wept Mrs. Smith.

Knobby kept looking around for Katrina. He approached the house but he could feel the intense heat of the flames and drew back. The smoke was thicker than ever. Knobby's whole body trembled from fear but he knew that Katrina was inside.

His keen sense of hearing picked up a faint cry and he knew who it was. She was alive!

He dashed headlong into the hot flames!

"No! Knobby!" yelled Nick. "Come back! Come back!" as he choked back tears. "You'll never make it!"

The smoke blinded Knobby as he ran in, but he knew his way around the house. The fire was snapping at him from all directions. Tongues of flames singed his hair as he jumped up the steps.

Knobby was beginning to get woozy from the heavy smoke, but he had to save Katrina. Moving blindly, his head bumped into an object that moved. It was the cradle! He had found her!

In his weakened condition, he jumped up and gave her a lick. There was no response. He grabbed her pajamas with his teeth and gently pulled her out of the cradle. Knobby barely managed to carry the heavy baby out of the room, through the hallway, and down the steps.

At the bottom of the stairs Knobby let go of her. His mouth was dry, his eyes barely open, as he tried to catch his breath. He fell over. He grabbed Katrina again and with his last ounce of strength crawled out of the house.

He gasped, rolled over and passed out from all the smoke he'd inhaled.

## Chapter 5: Who Needs Hollywood

At that very moment the emergency and fire trucks pulled up. Mr. Smith carried Katrina and Nick tearfully held Knobby in his arms as they carefully handed them to the firemen.

“Put the oxygen mask on the dog,” ordered Chief Waters. “I’ll give this little baby mouth to mouth resuscitation.” Within minutes Katrina started coughing and the color returned to her face.

The Smiths couldn’t control their tears of happiness as their baby began to cry. They knew she was going to be all right.

All eyes turned towards Knobby.

“The oxygen mask doesn’t seem to be doing much good, chief,” said the fireman working on Knobby. Nick and his parents waited for what seemed like an eternity for some sign of life. Suddenly, Knobby’s eyes began flickering. He rolled over, stood up, and shook himself from head to tail. They were so happy they laughed and cried at the same time. Knobby, still a little wobbly, slowly went from one person to another giving them all juicy kisses.

“I think your dog is going to be just fine and will be around for a long time,” laughed Chief Waters.

“He’s a hero,” responded Mrs. Smith. “He risked his life to save our little girl.”

“They thought he was a coward in Hollywood,” said Nick. “I wonder what they would think of him now? This was real fire and smoke!”

The firemen quickly extinguished the fire.

Nick bathed Knobby's smoke-filled eyes with cool water when they got home. Knobby lapped up a large pan of water and began feeling better. It had been a terrible evening for everyone. Nick and Knobby slowly crawled back into bed and slept like logs.

The newspapers and TV were splashed with stories of Knobby's heroic rescue.

Late one evening as Nick and Knobby were about to go to bed, the Kincade family received a telephone call from Mr. Baskerville, the dog trainer. "The producer has read the stories about Knobby," he said, "and realizes he made a mistake in letting the dog leave Hollywood without making a movie. We'd like to try again. We're sure that with the real experience he's had, Knobby will become a great star."

Cradling Knobby in his arms after Mr. Baskerville hung up, Nick said to his parents, "There's no need to go to Hollywood. Knobby doesn't have to become a star--he's something even better, he's a dog with a big heart, and that heart makes him my hero!"

**COMING NEXT: NICK & KNOBBY GO TO MEXICO**