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Born: 3 October 1916, Sunderland, United Kingdom
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Introduction:

The Author talks about his experience with Tricki, a small dog, who is pampered and overfed by his rich mistress Mrs. Pumphrey. He falls seriously ill and his mistress consults a veterinary surgeon (Author).
A Triumph of Surgery

Tricki, a small dog, is pampered and overfed by his rich mistress. He falls seriously ill and his mistress consults a veterinary surgeon. Does he perform an operation? Does the dog recover?

Read and Find Out

- Why is Mrs Pumphrey worried about Tricki?
- What does she do to help him? Is she wise in this?
- Who does I refer to in this story?

I was really worried about Tricki this time. I had pulled up my car when I saw him in the street with his mistress and I was shocked at his appearance. He had become hugely fat, like a bloated sausage, with a leg at each corner. His eyes, bloodshot and rheumy, stared straight ahead and his tongue lolled from his jaws.

Mrs Pumphrey hastened to explain, “He was so listless, Mr Herriot. He seemed to have no energy. I thought he must be suffering from malnutrition, so I have been giving him some little extras between meals to build him up, some malt and cod-liver oil and a bowl of Horlicks at night to make him sleep — nothing much really.”

“And did you cut down on the sweet things as I told you?”

“Oh, I did for a bit, but he seemed to be so weak I had to relent. He does love cream cakes and chocolates so, I can’t bear to refuse him.”

I looked down again at the little dog. That was the trouble. Tricki’s only fault was greed. He had never been known to refuse food; he would tackle a meal at any hour of the day or night. And I wondered about all the things Mrs Pumphrey hadn’t mentioned.

“Are you giving him plenty of exercise?”

“Well, he has his little walks with me as you can see, but Hodgkin, the gardener, has been down with lumbago, so there has been no ring-throwing lately.”

I tried to sound severe: “Now I really mean this. If you don’t cut his food right down and give him more exercise he is going to be really ill. You must harden your heart and keep him on a very strict diet.”

Mrs Pumphrey wrung her hands. “Oh I will, Mr Herriot. I’m sure you are right, but it is so difficult, so very difficult.” She set off, head down, along the road, as if determined to put the new regime into practice immediately.

I watched their progress with growing concern. Tricki was tottering along in his little tweed coat; he had a whole wardrobe of these coats — for the cold weather and a raincoat for the wet days. He struggled on, drooping in his harness. I thought it wouldn’t be long before I heard from Mrs Pumphrey.

The expected call came within a few days. Mrs Pumphrey was distraught. Tricki would eat nothing. Refused even his favourite dishes; and besides, he had bouts of vomiting. He spent all his time lying on a rug, panting. Didn’t want to go for walks, didn’t want to do anything.

I had made my plans in advance. The only way was to get Tricki out of the house for a period. I suggested that he be hospitalised for about a fortnight to be kept under observation.

The poor lady almost swooned. She was sure he would pine and die if he did not see her every day.

But I took a firm line. Tricki was very ill and this was the only way to save him; in fact, I thought it best to take him without delay and,
followed by Mrs Pumphrey's waltlings, I marched out to the car carrying the little dog wrapped in a blanket.

The entire staff was roused and maids rushed in and out bringing his day bed, his night bed, favourite cushions, toys and rubber rings, breakfast bowl, lunch bowl, supper bowl. Realising that my car would never hold all the stuff, I started to drive away. As I moved off, Mrs Pumphrey, with a despairing cry, threw an armful of the little coats through the window. I looked in the mirror before I turned the corner of the drive; everybody was in tears.

Out on the road, I glanced down at the pathetic little animal gasping on the seat by my side. I patted the head and Tricki made a brave effort to wag his tail. “Poor old lad,” I said. “You haven’t a kick in you but I think I know a cure for you.”
The vet was passing by the street when he saw Tricki and Mrs. Pumphrey. He became hugely fat, like a bloated sausage with a leg at each corner. His eyes, bloodshot and rheumy, he stared straight ahead and his tongue lolled from his jaws.

Mrs Pumphrey says that she has been giving various in-between meals to Tricki like Malt, Cod liver oil and horlicks to make him sleep. And she didn’t cut down on sugar too. Then Mr. Herriot asks about the exercise, to which she says that the gardener Hodgkin is down with a lumbago so no ring throwing is happening as well.
MR. Herriot tries to tell her seriously that if Tricki’s diet will not be monitored, the problem will get serious. Mrs. Pumphrey says that it is very difficult to let Tricki give up the food. But, she seemed to have decided to make it better.

Somehow, the author expected a call from her soon, which she did, in a few days. Tricki wasn’t eating anything and he was panting without moving, he had bouts of vomiting. The vet had already planned to take the dog under observation with him for a fortnight. Mrs. Pumphrey was scared that Tricki will not be able to manage without seeing her but the author took him to the surgery. With panic goodbyes by the staff and wailings of Mrs. Pumphrey.
Assignments

1. This episode describes the silly behaviour of a rich woman who is foolishly indulgent, perhaps because she is lonely. Do you think such people are merely silly, or can their actions cause harm to others?
2. Do you think there are also parents like Mrs. Pumphrey?

Extra questions:
1. How did Mr. Herriot describe the dog?
2. Who was Mrs. Pumphrey? And how was she with her dog?
3. Why is Mrs. Pumphrey worried about Tricki?