Vineet and Kavita lived with their parents in a beautiful house by the side of a large public garden. They had two cocker spaniels, Rana and Rani. Both were beautiful dogs. Vineet liked Rana more and treated him as his own pet. Kavita thought Rani was hers. But the dogs loved both the children.

When the children went to school in the morning, the dogs would go with them for some distance. Then the children would tell them to return home.
One day, Vineet had a holiday. Kavita started for school alone. Both dogs tried to follow her, but Vineet called Rana back. Rani went with Kavita. As usual, Kavita told Rani to return home after some distance. Rani stopped, but she did not want to leave Kavita. Kavita could not take the dog to school, so she ordered her to go back. Rani, then, slowly started for home.
In the meantime, Vineet and Rana went into the public garden and started playing. Vineet was hoping that Rani would join them. They played for a long time, but Rani did not come. Vineet began to wonder why. They went home and looked for her. She was not at home. Vineet came out of the house and called for Rani, but there was no answer. Vineet then told his mother that Rani was missing.
“She may have gone with Kavita to school,” said his mother.

“I don’t think so,” said Vineet, shaking his head impatiently. Rana too was showing impatience at Rani’s absence. He was running about the house looking for her. Then he went back to the garden. He roamed about, barking occasionally as if calling out to Rani. When he did not find her, Rana went back home.
Vineet was waiting for Kavita. As soon as she came from school, he asked her, "Where is Rani?"
"I sent her back," said Kavita. "Why? What has happened?"
"She is missing," said her mother.
"She must be somewhere nearby. Come on Vineet, let us go and look for her," said Kavita. Vineet and Kavita went back to the place where Kavita had told Rani to go home. Rana went with them. They searched for Rani and called out to her several times, but Rani was not found. They returned home worried and unhappy.

Vineet's father was told of the missing dog. He thought it best to inform the police, so he telephoned the Police Inspector. The Inspector promised to do everything he could to trace the dog and added that, recently, many pet dogs had been missing from different houses.

Rana looked really lonely and upset. He sneaked out of the house quietly.
Rana went to the public garden again. There were many visitors there including children. Some children had brought their pets along with them. Rana moved around looking for Rani. Some dogs were hostile and barked at him, but he ignored them. Rana tried to pick up Rani’s scent, hoping she had been somewhere in the garden.
Time passed. It was evening. Rana did not still want to return home. He went out of the garden and started walking up and down the streets. At times, stray dogs chased him and he had to run to save himself. Sometimes, he hid in safe places and watched other dogs go by. But he did not see Rani anywhere.
Rana was feeling very hungry. He had not eaten anything since morning. He kept on walking, up and down, street after street. It was getting late at night. Suddenly a huge dog spotted Rana, dashed against him and started a fight. The owner of a tea shop saw the dogs fighting. He took a stout stick and beat up the big dog who got frightened and ran away. The shopkeeper took Rana to his shop. The poor dog was trembling. The shopkeeper attended to his wounds and gave him some milk and bread. He then closed his shop for the night and took Rana home. His wife was glad to have a pretty pet once again. She once had a lovely dog which had disappeared one day. She put some medicine on Rana's wounds and kept him in a basket on a piece of soft woollen cloth. Rana was tired but he had a comfortable night.

Next morning, the shopkeeper's wife took him out of the basket, washed his wounds and dressed them again. She then gave him bread with milk. Rana felt better and rested for a few hours. The shopkeeper had gone to his shop. He had told his wife to keep an eye on the dog.

In the afternoon, Rana felt he had regained his strength and was able to go out. He waited a while and when he was sure that the shopkeeper's wife was out of sight, he sneaked out quietly and went on to the streets again.
He tried to avoid people by taking one side of the road and hiding himself behind trees, dustbins and other objects. However a group of children spotted him.

"Look! There is a lovely dog!" said one of them.

"He is alone. Let us catch him," said another.

"If we get him, he is mine," said Chhotu, who had lost his pet dog the day before. He and the other children were searching for it.

The boys ran after Rana. Rana ran fast to escape the boys but the boys ran faster and surrounded him. One of them caught him by the leg and another by the neck. Rana was once again a prisoner. He struggled hard to get away but it was of no use. He felt, however, that he was in the hands of kind boys who would not hurt him. He could not get away easily, so he decided to wait for a suitable chance to escape. He went quite willingly with the boys and played with them on the way.

The boys took Rana to Chhotu's house. Chhotu's parents were happy that he had found a better looking dog than the one he had lost. They did not know whether someone would turn up to claim the dog. Anyway, they decided to keep Rana.
Rana thus started a new life in a new home. Everyone liked him but Rana was not happy. He was always chained. He wanted to be free to go and look for Rani.

Rana started playing with Chhotu and Chhotu began to remove the chain sometimes and would take him out for a stroll. One day, Rana was taken for a
longer walk than usual. He was alert and when they reached the corner of a street, he suddenly ran away. Chhotu called out to him and tried to follow him. But Rana dodged Chhotu and disappeared.

Rana was once again on the move. This time he was careful not to fall into the hands of anybody. He avoided people. He travelled a lot, always on the lookout for Rani.
During his search he came to a street on the further side of the public garden, where there were very few houses. There he heard some dogs barking. He followed the sound. It led him to a well protected house. The dogs were barking inside the house. Rana thought he heard Rani barking as well!

He tried to get into the house but the fence was so thick that it was impossible for him to get in. The gate was locked and there was no way to squeeze through it or under it. Rana walked round and round the compound of the house.

Suddenly, under the fence, he saw a passage through the ground, made perhaps by a rat, a rabbit or a mongoose. He sneaked into the passage and started to dig. After hours of labour he was able to widen the passage and crawl through.

Silently, he approached the house. He saw many crates, placed over one another, each containing one or two dogs. He saw Rani alone in one of them. Rani recognized Rana and barked happily.

Just then, the owner of the house came out. He saw Rana. A beautiful dog, he thought, and wanted to catch him. Rana ran. The man ran after him. But Rana escaped through the passage he had made. He ran fast across the
garden to his old house, saw Vineet and Kavita and started barking.

“It’s Rana!” shouted Vineet happily. Rana, what is the matter? Have you found Rani?”

Rana barked again and ran back. He waited at a distance to see if anybody was following him. He returned barking and again ran out. The children told their father what the dog was doing. The father said, “It is certain that Rana
has seen Rani somewhere. He wants us to follow him.”

Vineet and Kavita were ready to follow Rana. But their father thought it safe to inform the police first. The Police Inspector asked them to wait for him. In a few minutes, the Inspector arrived along with some policemen. All of them followed Rana.

Rana ran across the public garden, never stopping until he reached the gate of the house where Rani and the other dogs were imprisoned.

The gate was open. Inside, there was a truck being loaded with crates containing the dogs.

The Police Inspector and his men entered the house. “Stop!” shouted the Inspector. “You are under arrest.”

The police took the dog thief and his helpers into custody. All the dogs were removed to the police station to be returned to their respective owners.

Later, the Inspector told Vineet and Kavita that the dog thief had been stealing beautiful dogs from many places in the district and smuggling them out to larger cities. He had been caught, thanks to Rana!

Rana and Rani were together again. Vineet, Kavita and the family were happy.