Hello. Ushpa here. I am a puppy, but mostly-grown. "Ushpa" means "ash" and I have a black nose and partly black ears, as if I stuck my face in a fire. I recently adopted two humans named Steve and Hannah. They feed me pretty well (but I loved them before they gave me food). We believe my ancestors are Pekinese and Spaniel, so I am a proud Mutsizio.

I am from the town of Ushpabamba, where I first found Steve and Hannah cleaning windows at the church. The door was open, so I walked in and made my presence known. Can you guess Steve's first words to me? "You're cute. Now get out." But I knew my cuteness was bigger than his cold heart, and I won him over by the end of the day.

When they found out who had been feeding me before, they paid those people for the right to feed me from now on. But I am writing on behalf of Steve and Hannah and they want me to announce that... they have moved to Ushpabamba! They are too busy fixing up our new house to write the update this month, so I'm taking a turn.

The adventure started the Monday after Thanksgiving, when Steve took off with his uncle to buy some materials for Ushpabamba. A couple hours later, Steve showed up with a large box-truck and asked Hannah if he could grab a few boxes of stuff to take up to their new house. "If you wanted to take some stuff, you should have gotten some things from the 'Shoe Box,'" she said. "I grabbed a few things," he replied in a mischievous tone. "Did you get everything?" Hannah asked breathlessly. "Yeah!" "Are we moving today?" She squealed. "No... but maybe in a couple days!"

That was the beginning of the move and it hasn't slowed down all week. The next day, Uncle Keith, Steve, Hannah, and I took off for Ushpabamba to work on building doors for their new bedroom and our beds. They forgot to build mine! I'm still sleeping on a piece of foam. They worked all day and didn't get done with everything they wanted to do, so Uncle Keith wondered if the three of us couldn't stay the night and guard the tools instead of dragging them down the mountain and then back up again. They agreed and we spent our first night here.
Steve packs cement into crevices eroded by years of neglect and rainy seasons.

There was just one problem. They hadn't brought any blankets or food. Humans aren't as tuff as puppies who can sleep without being all wrapped up all night long, but I don't judge. Hannah went back down with Uncle Keith to buy some food and pack up the bear necessities. I kept Steve company while he cleaned up the house and moved stuff around. I think he was just trying to keep warm. Hannah got back after dark in Uncle Keith’s truck, loaded down with some sandwich food and about everything they had been living with at the Anderson’s.

Wednesday morning somebody knocked at the door. A neighbor who goes to Steve and Hannah's church came bearing gifts! She brought vegetables, which I don't care for, so I didn't realize yet how my day would get exciting.

Hannah left with that lady to see her house. Then Steve got busy mixing cement in a little bucket, and I helped him fill in some cracks around the big front doors. Then Hannah came home saying that we were invited to lunch up the mountain and we had better hurry because it was a good twenty-minute hike and Elsa said the potatoes will cook really fast. "The drops of cement in Ushpa’s fur look like big fat ticks," Hannah laughed.

So they locked up the church-house and we walked fast up the curvy dirt road and then a tall hill. Hannah said, "She has a bajillion cuys of all sizes, and she almost butchered one on the spot!"

I followed Hannah and Steve into Elsa’s adobe kitchen. I could smell the embers of a fire and something else...Then I sensed lots of excited little movements in the dark.

Guinea pigs! Dozens of them! Some very plump, and some the size of fat white mice. They were frozen in place and they would stare at me from their dark cave under a bench. Then one would run fast to where another stood, and stand in that one’s place while it took a turn running fast. It was like a chain reaction, until they all found places again and stood staring at me. I saw that they wanted to be brave.

Before we had to leave, my patience paid off and some little fellows came and touched my nose. I held very still.

We came back down the mountain. Hannah spent the rest of the day scouring the bathroom. Steve painted walls. Next morning, guess what Steve and Hannah did all day? (painted)
I like living in Ushpabamba, and Steve and Hannah do too. They are learning what times of day they can catch minibuses to town. They are meeting some of their neighbors. They think they will be able to host the first Bible Study and worship service this Sunday evening. I hope that means I will get a lot of free cuddles!

Steve and Hannah ask for prayer for themselves and the community of Ushpabamba, and also for their church leaders in Cusco who have a lot of say in where they go and how long they stay there.

Goodbye for now! ~Ushie, for Steve ‘n’ Hannah

A neighbor came to visit me too. I suspect he is related to me.