

## Chapter 1

*Pleeeeee be daylight!*

“Rats, it’s still dark out,” Abby leaned over to check the time on her illuminated Star Wars clock. It was only 5 am ... way too early to wake anyone up. Even if it was her birthday.

Abby flopped her head back down on the pillow and smiled. *At last, I’m ten years old.* Forever, or so it felt, she’d been begging her parents for a puppy. Every time she asked, her mom and dad would glance at one another, and then, pause, sigh, and mutter excuses like “Let’s wait until you’re older” and “A dog is too much responsibility at your age.”

Abby would ask them back, “So, when then? When will I be old enough to have a dog? Exactly what is ‘old enough?’ ” and on and on. Somehow over the years the magic age of ten had been decided as old enough. At last, the magic day had arrived. Yes!

Abby pulled the covers over her head.

“Come on, daylight.”

Her brain was wide awake with dog thoughts. A memory of a family conversation popped into her head. Jonathan, her younger brother, had asked, “So, what kinda dog are we gonna get? I want a ... ”

“Stop, Jonathan!” Abby had interrupted. “Let’s get this straight. It is not your dog. It’s my dog, so it doesn’t matter what you want. Got it?”

Jonathan celebrated his sixth birthday last month. He really wasn’t a horrid kid, not mean or anything. But, he was annoying most of the time, and said stupid things a lot of the time.

“Mommy? Daddy?” Jonathan’s eyes darted from one parent to the other.

“Yes, Jon, it will be her dog,” Mom said. “And, I might add ... her responsibility, which means feeding, walking, cleaning up ... ”

Jonathan blurted, “Okay, but I still don’t get how Abby can bring a dog in the house with me ‘lergic to animals. I can’t even pet Pounce, our very own cat, without getting all sneezy and itchy-eyed. It’s not fair. What if the dog jumps up on me? What if ... ”

“Oh, not to worry, Jonathan,” Abby sweetly sang. “We’ve decided to give you away. Didn’t Mom and Dad tell you?”

“Abby!” the adults cried in unison.

“Jon-Jon, Abby’s being silly ... again,” Mom gave him a reassuring bear-hug.

Dad continued, “This dog is going to be part of the family ... our whole family. And, Jon, we’ll find a dog with special hair, just so you won’t be allergic to it.”

“Cool!” Jonathan replied. “So, I can play with the dog and not sneeze or anything?”

Mom’s eyes focused on Abby.

“Yeah, yeah, no problemo,” Abby nodded, adding under her breath, *but only when I say you can, snot-head.*

“What kinda special hair? Can we get one with blue hair? Blue’s my favorite color. And, you’re not really giving me away, right? It’s a joke, right? Hey, how do ya know I won’t be ‘lergic to the special hair? And, suppose they say it’s special hair, but when ... ”

“Whoa, slow down, Jonathan,” Abby’s mom smiled. “Yes to joke question. We are definitely not giving you away.”

Dad added, “Some types of dogs come with hair that doesn’t shed, and it’s the loose hair that makes you sneeze.”

Abby remembered visiting her Aunt Maude, who lived in the city in an apartment. Aunt Maude’s cute little teeny-tiny poodle, named Muffin, sported a fancy hair-do and went to a beauty salon for dogs only. Abby thought this was so funny and imagined the dogs sitting in

chairs under hairdryers reading magazines and gossiping with each other. Muffin had to get her hair 'done' because she didn't shed; her hair would just keep growing longer and longer.

Abby said, "Let's get a poodle like Muffin!"

"Too small for me," Dad replied.

Jonathan joined in, "Yeah, Daddy and me wanna a big dog ... one the size of a polar bear. Right, Dad?"

"I want," Dad corrected.

"You want what?" Jonathan asked.

Abby snapped at her brother, "Argh! Jonathan, are you being stupid on purpose or are you really that dumb?"

"Well," Mom offered, "the Woods over on Cedar Lane have a 'standard' poodle. And, she's about the height of a golden retriever."

"Sounds perfect!" Abby and Dad agreed.

"Can we get a blue standard doodle?" Jonathan asked.

"**P**oodle, that's **p**oodle! And, it's not we, it's me getting the **p**oodle. And, dogs don't even come in blue. Do ... you ... understand?"

Abby glared at her brother. Jonathan smiled back.

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Meanwhile, in a penthouse apartment on the other side of town, Sophie opened her eyes and scanned her new bedroom. Today was her tenth birthday. And, her tenth bedroom. Of course, she didn't recall all the moves, but from as far back as she remembered as soon as she

got used to one place, they moved to a new place. This bedroom was the biggest and fanciest yet ... with her own private bath and a playroom filled with cardboard boxes of dolls, toys and games.

*I hate moving all the time, Sophie thought. Why bother to unpack when we'll have to pack it all up again.*

Last night, Bianca, the new 'au pair' from Portugal reminded her "Your mother promised to go with you to pick out a puppy on your birthday. Won't that be fun? And, your father is expected to arrive from Paris in time for your party."

Sophie was excited about getting a dog, although she had really wanted a kitten. She remembered the night when she first brought up the idea of a kitten.

"Cats shed and scratch furniture. And, I don't like cats," her mother said.

Her father knew that the family's latest move was upsetting to Sophie and suggested "Well, maybe a dog, then. We could get one that doesn't shed and is well trained."

"And who exactly will train and walk this dog?" her mother grilled.

"I will!" Sophie said, "And when I can't do it, hire someone – just like you buy someone to do your cooking, cleaning, driving, shopping and babysitting, or rather 'au pairing.'"

Her mother interrupted to explain how fortunate Sophie was that they could afford "support staff." She prattled on and on. Sophie heard some words about a pet helping in the transition to a new home. Somehow by the end of the conversation (or lecture being more like it), her parents agreed she could adopt a puppy once they moved.

*Whatever, thought Sophie. At least, I'll get a furry friend out of this move.*

