

The
Scruffy
Puppy

For everyone at Park Lane Primary School – and especially for Class 3S and 3R!

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Chapter One



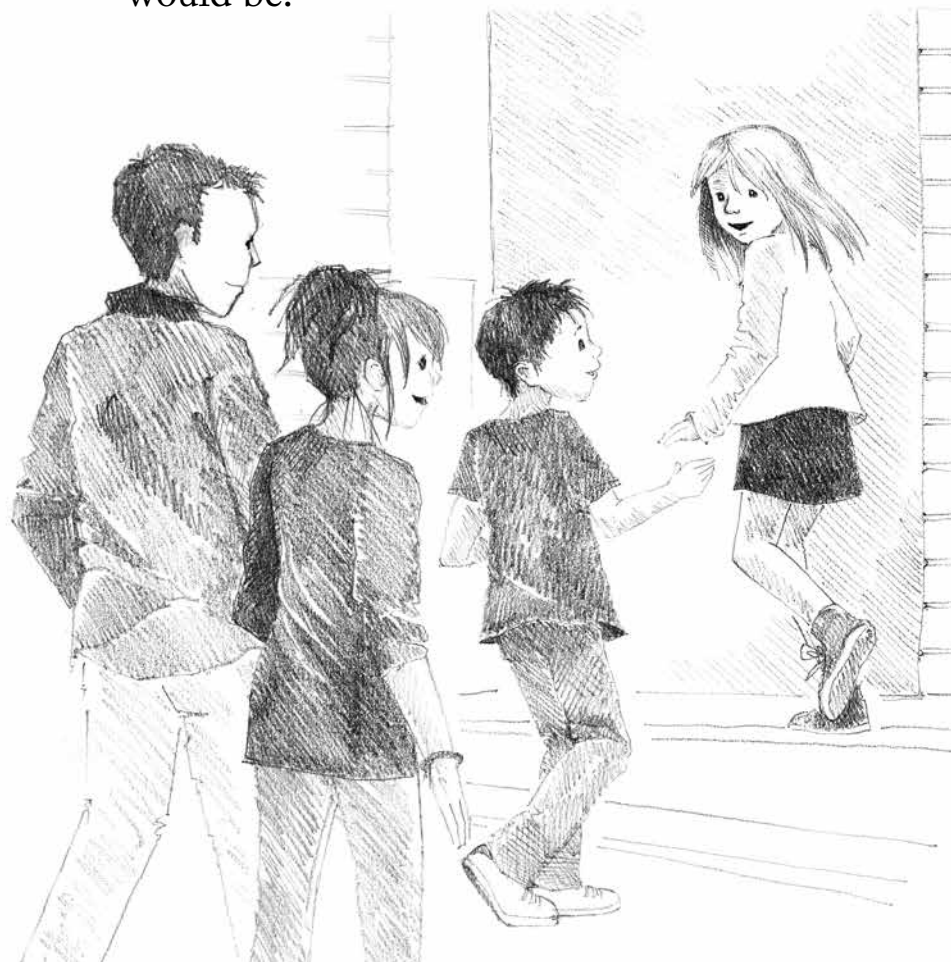
Bella couldn't help doing a sort of hopping little dance as they went up the steps at the front of the animal shelter. She was just too excited to walk sensibly. She had been waiting so long for this day. It had been weeks and weeks since Mum and Dad had first started talking seriously about getting a dog, and before that Bella

had been trying to persuade them for *years*.

Still, they were really here, walking into Redlands Animal Shelter to find a dog who could be their very own.

“What sort of dog do you think we’ll get?” she asked suddenly, turning round on the top step, and looking at her mum and dad, and Tom, her older brother. They were all following behind as she had run ahead of them from the car. Bella had wanted to ask this question – and lots of others – ever since Mum had told them about the trip to the animal shelter earlier in the week. But she hadn’t quite dared. What if they couldn’t decide on a favourite breed and gave up on the whole idea? Even now, she glanced

anxiously from Mum to Dad to Tom, wondering what they would say. She’d been thinking about it a lot herself – trying to decide what her absolute favourite, best, loveliest kind of dog would be.



She hadn't thought about much else for weeks, actually. Her friend Megan had started to roll her eyes every time Bella mentioned dogs at school, or suggested going to the library to look at dog books again. And Mr Peters, their teacher, had told Bella off for daydreaming at least three times. On the other hand, he had given her a star and two house points for her poem about dogs. So it sort of evened out.

But even after all that, Bella still hadn't decided what her top dog actually was. She knew they were getting their dog from the shelter because buying a dog from a breeder would be very expensive, and Mum and Dad really wanted to give a home to a dog who didn't have one, as well.

So in a way, it was good that she hadn't set her heart on one particular breed, because the chances of that exact breed being at the shelter were probably small. Still, wasn't it a bit strange that she couldn't decide what her favourite dog really was, when she could choose from any that she liked? She knew what the problem was – it was just that she liked them *all*...

"If there was every sort of dog at the shelter, what would your favourite be?" she asked her mum. "I know it won't be there," she added hurriedly. "I'm just interested."

Mum smiled at her. "I'd been wondering when you'd ask that. I was a bit surprised that you hadn't been on the computer, looking at dog

websites and working out exactly what sort of dog you'd like."

Bella gave her a little embarrassed smile. "That's just what I have been doing!" she admitted. "But I can't decide!"

Mum ruffled Bella's hair as she opened the door to the shelter's reception area. "If I could have any dog in the world, I'd like something quite little and cute. Maybe a dachshund."

"Is that a sausage dog?" Tom asked suspiciously. "I don't want a sausage dog. My mates would laugh. Something big would be cool." He grinned. "I really like those big hairy things."

Bella rolled her eyes. "Great description. Which big hairy things?"

"You know. The ones in the paint ads."

"Oh! An Old English Sheepdog!"

Bella nodded excitedly. "They're gorgeous."

"Sorry, you two." Dad shook his head at Bella and Tom. "I shouldn't think there'll be an Old English Sheepdog here, or even a dachshund. I should think most of the dogs will be strays. Mixed breeds, probably."

Bella nodded. Mum was over by the reception desk now, explaining that they'd like to look at dogs for adoption. Bella was so happy, she couldn't keep still. She had to keep talking, or she might burst with excitement. "What sort of dog would you like, Dad?"

"Mmm." Dad frowned. "I fancy something quite big. I like the idea of taking a dog when I go running."

Tom snorted. "So, a greyhound then."



Their dad was really tall and he liked to go on long runs. He had entered the marathon before – they’d all gone up to London to watch him.

Bella shook her head. “I don’t know about a greyhound, Dad. I’m not sure they could keep up with you. They’re more about going super-fast, but only for a short time. And anyway, if there

was a greyhound here, it might be an ex-racing dog.” She frowned, and stood still for a minute. “And they’re really sad. The owners just dump them when they can’t race any more, and they’ve never had a proper home, or been looked after. They’ve all got terrible teeth, because the owners never took real care of them. I read about one who had to have all his teeth taken out.”

Dad sighed. “I think quite a few of the dogs here might have sad stories, Bella. We just have to think that at least we’re going to give one of them a home.” He put an arm round her shoulders. “So, what do you think? Great, big, hairy dog? Tiny little fluffy thing?”



Bella sighed.
“I just don’t
know! I keep
trying to imagine
myself with
different sorts of
dog, but I like all of
them...” She smiled

up at her dad. “When we see them for
real, it’ll be different, won’t it? We’ll
know which is the perfect dog for us.
I’m sure we will.”



“How are we ever going to choose?”
Bella said helplessly. There were so
many dogs, and most of them were
really excited to see visitors. They

jumped up from their beds, and
hurried over to the wire netting in the
front of the pens, scrabbling madly,
and begging to be stroked, loved, taken
home. There were just a few who didn’t
bother getting up, and Bella thought
that they were even sadder. Those dogs
must have been at the shelter so long
that they knew it was no use. No one
was ever going to want them. Their
hopeless eyes made her want to cry.

The worst thing was that she could
see that her family couldn’t take them,
either. They were mostly elderly, and
didn’t look like they’d want to go for
runs with Dad, or play around in the
garden with her and Tom. But she
wished she could be the one to make
them happy.