

CHAPTER ONE



No Pets

On Friday afternoon Matthew Wade ran out of the schoolyard, waited for the crossing guard to wave him across the street and reached his building in four and a quarter minutes. Matthew always ran faster when he felt happy. Well, he didn't exactly feel happy, but he felt much better than he had on Monday, which was his first day at Baldwin Elementary School.

How could he be happy without Lucky? Matthew's grandfather had brought Lucky home a year earlier on his seventh birthday and said, "This little runt needs looking after. Think you can feed him regularly, clean up after him, take him for walks and teach him not to chase the chickens? Puppies are lots of work. You'll have to train him to be a good watchdog!"

The tips of Matthew's ears turned red; the smile on his face almost split it in two. He tried to hug



CHAPTER 1 •• No Pets

both the pup and his grandfather, but his arms weren't quite long enough.

"I'll do everything right, you'll see. Thanks, Grandpa, this is the greatest birthday present ever. I'll call the pup Lucky, because this is my lucky day."

Lucky left puddles in all the wrong places and Matthew cleaned them up. Lucky howled for his mother in the night, he howled at the dark and he didn't like thunderstorms, but Matthew got up to comfort him.

Lucky learned fast. He and Matthew were inseparable. Wherever Matthew went, Lucky came too. Not anymore. Now that he had moved to Vancouver, he and Lucky were hundreds of miles apart.

Matthew was out of breath by the time he reached his apartment building. He stared at the sign on the door: NO PETS ALLOWED.



CHAPTER 1 •• No Pets

Every day Matthew hoped for a miracle—that one day he'd look up and the sign would be gone. But every day the letters stared back at him: NO PETS ALLOWED. Matthew felt like getting a ladder, climbing up and taking the sign down.

I'd like to go and dig a deep hole and bury that old sign somewhere, so no one will ever find it.

Why did they have to move to Vancouver? Mum said the move would be a great opportunity, a challenge for both of them. Best of all her new job had great hours so she and Matthew could be home at the same time. And Vancouver was so near the ocean and had so many trees! But it didn't feel so wonderful to Matthew. How could he enjoy anything without Lucky?

This was Matthew's first visit to a city as big as Vancouver. What was so wonderful about it? He didn't think much of it: noisy traffic day and night, too many people rushing off somewhere. Worst of all, there was no Lucky to come home to.



Matthew sprinted down the hallway of his building.

He was stopped by a stern voice. "Wipe your feet when you come in," said the manager of the building.

"Sorry, I forgot!"

The manager glared at him. He wore a checkered shirt with the sleeves rolled up, showing strong

CHAPTER 1 •• No Pets

muscled arms. His jeans were tucked inside his work boots, and a cellphone was clipped to his belt.

“You’re the new kid from apartment 103, aren’t you? My name’s Leo, *Mister* Leo. I’ve been resident manager of this building for ten years. I make sure the rules are kept. You’d better remember that. Wipe your feet when you come in. Don’t run in the hallways. No noise after ten o’clock at night and absolutely NO PETS ALLOWED. Is that clear?” He stared at Matthew until Matthew went back and wiped his feet on the front doormat.

“Right, don’t forget again.”

Matthew didn’t answer, but for a moment he was almost glad that Lucky was back on the farm! Mister Leo sounded as though he didn’t like anyone, not kids or dogs or even grown-ups.