

CHAPTER ONE

“Here’s Buckley!” Lizzie Peterson led an excited Yorkie into the reception area at Bowser’s Backyard, her aunt’s doggy day-care center. Buckley pulled at the leash when he saw who was waiting for him.

“Buckley!” The woman knelt down and opened her arms, and Lizzie let the leash drop so the little dog could dash into his owner’s embrace. Lizzie loved seeing people and their dogs reunited at the end of the day. It was her favorite time to help out at Aunt Amanda’s—especially on Fridays, when the people and dogs were looking forward to being together all weekend.



“Buckley was a good boy today,” Lizzie told his owner. “I hear he had a lot of fun with Lena and Skye.” Lena and Skye were sister puppies, almost but not quite identical. They were both happy, fluffy, bouncy poodle mixes with pretty brown-and-cream coats. Lizzie knew that they both loved to play.

“Buckley loves it here,” said his owner, smiling at Lizzie. “But I’m glad I get him to myself for two whole days now.”

“Bye, Buckley, have a great weekend!” said Lizzie. She waved good-bye to Buckley as she went back to the kennels to fetch another dog whose owner was waiting.

Lizzie was excited about the upcoming weekend, too. Her aunt had invited her to Camp Bowser, her doggy sleepaway camp in the country. They would be driving up tomorrow, and Lizzie couldn’t wait. It was always a treat to



spend time there with Aunt Amanda, who was possibly the only person in the world more dog-crazy than Lizzie. Aunt Amanda knew so much about dogs, and was always happy to share her knowledge with Lizzie.

Lizzie had loved dogs for as long as she could remember. She loved playing with them, training them, cuddling with them, and learning about them. Besides helping her aunt, she also volunteered at the local animal shelter, and she even had a dog-walking business. On top of all that, she and her younger brothers, Charles and the Bean, had managed to convince their parents to let them foster puppies. Now the Petersons were a foster family who took care of puppies who needed homes.

Best of all, Lizzie had her own puppy, the best puppy ever. Buddy had started out as a foster puppy, but when the whole family had fallen in love, they had decided to keep him forever.



“Can Buddy come to Camp Bowser with us?” she asked her aunt as they got ready to sweep and mop the kennels after all the dogs had left.

“Aw, I love Buddy, you know that,” said Aunt Amanda. “But this time it’s just going to be us and Bowser, remember? We have a lot to do if we’re going to plan that clicker-training workshop.”

Lizzie nodded. “Right,” she said. “Got it.” She was flattered that Aunt Amanda had asked for her help this weekend. They were going to work on a new workshop that her aunt wanted to start offering. Lizzie had heard of clicker training, but she’d never tried it—which, according to Aunt Amanda, was perfect. Lizzie hoped she wouldn’t let Aunt Amanda down.

“You and Bowser will be learning at the same time,” her aunt had said. “We’ll keep a training diary and see how much we can do in one weekend. And if I’m right about my guess, we can

make it so simple that even kids can take the workshop. Of course, most kids don't know nearly as much as you do about dogs, but still."

Lizzie felt herself blushing. Compliments from her aunt meant so much. It was one thing for your parents to tell you how fantastic you were—that was kind of their job, really. But to have Aunt Amanda compliment her—well, that was extra special.

Aunt Amanda really was a dog expert. She had Bowser, a big, calm, older golden retriever, who was always up for anything. She also had three pugs, but this weekend they would be staying home with Uncle James. "We don't need all that wild pug energy when we're trying to concentrate," she said now as she wrung out the mop.

"Remind me again about how it works?" Lizzie asked. "The clicker thing?"

"It's simple, really," said her aunt. She pulled a small rectangular device out of her pocket and

pressed on it with her thumb. A sharp *click* rang out. “Once a dog learns that this sound,” she clicked again, “means the same as ‘good dog’ and that a treat is coming, you can train them quickly to do all sorts of things.”

“But why is it better than just saying ‘good dog’?” Lizzie asked.

“Well, because it’s loud, and it’s a particular sound that doesn’t sound like anything else,” said her aunt. “It’s very clear, and you can time it exactly so the dog knows just what it is that he’s doing right.” She smiled at Lizzie as they hung up the mop and broom. “You’ll see. I think you’ll love it. Take a look online tonight if you want. I’ll send you links to some of my favorite clicker trainers’ videos.”

Just then, Aunt Amanda’s phone rang. “Hello?” she said, putting the phone to her ear.

Lizzie watched as her aunt listened, her expression becoming more and more concerned.

“Hi, Mac. Oh, dear. Poor Donut. I can just imagine. How can I help?” She looked upset. “This weekend? Now? Well . . . sure. Yes. Of course.” She hung up and turned to Lizzie.

“What happened?” Lizzie asked.

“Do you remember Donut?” asked Aunt Amanda. “That little German shepherd–Lab mix? The sweetest pup.”

Lizzie nodded. “She was in your puppy kindergarten a while ago, right?” Lizzie loved helping out at puppy kindergarten classes. It was always so much fun to see the youngest dogs try hard to please their owners—when all they really wanted to do was bark, run around like wild things, and wrestle with one another. It was total chaos, total joy.

“That’s right,” said Aunt Amanda. “And they’ve been regulars here since then. But now her family has to move across country for a job. They’ve found a great home to rent, but . . .”

“They don’t allow dogs,” said Lizzie. She’d heard it before at the animal shelter. It was one of the most common reasons why people had to give up their dogs. Lizzie felt bad for the family—but she also felt a familiar little tickle of excitement. “So maybe they need a foster family for Donut?” she asked.

“Not quite yet,” said Aunt Amanda. “They’re still hoping for a miracle. But time is running out. They’re packing up all their belongings this weekend, and Mac says that Donut is getting very upset. She knows something’s going on. He asked me to take her for the weekend. So—”

“So we get to take her to camp with us?” Lizzie asked. She felt sorry for Donut’s owners, but she

couldn't help being excited, too. "Maybe we can try clicker training her, too."

Her aunt looked at her and nodded. "You know," she said, "that's actually not a bad idea at all."

The front door buzzer sounded just then, and Aunt Amanda went to unlock the door. A man came in, holding one end of a leash. At the other end was an adorable, roly-poly, brown-and-black puppy.

"Donut!" Lizzie said, kneeling down.