

CHAPTER ONE

“Lizzie, is that you?” Mom called from upstairs.

Lizzie pulled her nose out of the soft fur on her puppy’s neck just long enough to answer. “It’s me!” she shouted back. Then she went back to kissing Buddy, who had been waiting at the door when she arrived home from school. Buddy greeted her every afternoon, tail wagging and ears perked. He was the cutest, most kissable puppy ever and the best friend anyone could ask for. Lizzie stroked his brown fur and tickled the white heart-shaped patch on his chest. “I wish we could play,” she told him, “but you know I have to get going if I’m going to finish before dinner.”



Lizzie and three of her friends had a dog-walking business that kept them very busy in the afternoon, after school. It was important to Lizzie that every dog on her list got her full attention. She did more than just walk dogs: depending on what her clients wanted, she also fed them, groomed them, and helped train them.

Lizzie Peterson loved dogs. In fact, she was pretty much dog-crazy. She loved to play with dogs, draw them, read about them, and write stories about them. She had even convinced her parents that their family should foster puppies. Being a foster family meant taking care of puppies who needed help. Every puppy who had stayed with the Petersons had stolen Lizzie's heart, but the whole point of fostering was to find them excellent homes. That was why none of them stayed for very long — except for Buddy. He was



the one puppy the Petersons had not been able to give up: now Buddy was a member of the family, along with Lizzie and her younger brothers, Charles and the Bean.

Lizzie was still sitting in the front hall, petting Buddy, when her mother walked down the stairs. “Hi, sweetie,” Mom said. “On your way out soon? Mrs. Mooney just called to say she didn’t need you to stop by today.”

“Again?” Lizzie shook her head. “I don’t get it. Why wouldn’t she want me to take Bubbles for a walk?”

Bubbles was a beautiful standard poodle puppy, just a few months old. Lizzie loved her bright eyes and soft reddish-brown curls and the way she bounced along so eagerly when she and Lizzie walked down the street together. Lately, though, her owner, Mrs. Mooney, kept canceling.