

Chapter One

How Taz becomes Rosie

James and I are sitting in an outdoor café, and it is very sunny outside. The sunlight is so bright it is blinding James while he is reading the paper.

“Enough!” he says, suddenly and rises up from the table, putting the paper down.

“Yes, my dear?” I am vaguely alarmed.

“I have an idea, Jan!” James is struck with an idea. He gets ideas like this out of the blue, a great flash of lightning.

“What is it?” I am intrigued, and slowly place my coffee cup back into the saucer.

“A dog. That’s it! A dog...I want to get a dog!” His voice gets more excited as he speaks.

“A dog? Really. Wonderful! But can you...” I am confused, and feel a tumult of emotions. How can he get a dog? Dogs need care, need to be fed, walked, watered, pet every day....

James turns his head suddenly, his eyes are sharp and gleaming with some hidden joy.

“Do you want to go with me to go look at one right now?” He is ready to go.

“Why..why, yes, I do! Do you know where to go?” I am surprised and happy.

“Yes, I do...There is this animal shelter I hear of, great dogs and cats. Let’s go there.” His voice is confident.

“Ok,” I say and happily rise from the coffee table.

“Let’s go!” he says, and we rush to the car. I don’t know why we rush; but it’s exciting.

We drive out of town and a little bit into the country. There is a small brown building up the road we are driving on and James pulls up his Volkswagen Bus up on the right on the concrete besides the building. There is a sign on the grass that says “COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER. VISITORS WELCOME.”

We get off the bus and I follow James.

James turns the door open and there is a tall counter and a tiny woman behind it.

“I’ll be right with y—ou,” she pipes at us, in a high friendly voice.

“Ok,” James says and looks at me.

“Ok” I say and look back at him.

We wait. After five minutes (though it feels like two hours!) the lady looks up at us again.

“Are you here to get an animal or drop one off?” she asks.

“To get one,” James says confidently, and then looks at me.

“Yes!” I agree.

“Ok, just one moment please,” she says, shuffling some papers. She gives us some papers to sign.

“It’ll be \$50 to get a dog or cat from us. They come spayed,” she says, reassuringly.

“No babies, then, huh?” James says musingly to me.

“What?” the lady asks.

“Oh nothing,” James reassures her.

I smile.

We sign the papers. James pays \$50.

“Are you ready?” the lady asks.

We both nod our heads, yes.

“Ok, follow me,” the lady says, and lifts up the high white counter, and we pass through behind her.

We come into a big big room. It is so noisy! Tons of cats and dogs, all in little steel and wire cages! Some black, some brown, some speckled, some yellow, some white! And all of them excited, barking, yipping, meowing, and purring!

James’s eyes get big, his face gets red. It’s altogether so loud! I start to laugh when I look at all the animals, they are so excited, it’s a zoo!

James says, “I want to get a border collie. They are so great. I had one when I was a kid. His name was Bandit.”

“That sounds good,” I say.

A round woman appears. She has glasses on, and a blue suit, and she looks very worried.

“Oh I have so much to do!” she says to herself, talking and opening cages, checking the cats and dogs. She is so busy and looks very frazzled.

James goes up to her.

“I’d like to get a border collie,” he says.

The woman smiles and nods her head.

“Oh, yes! We’ve got those..plenty of ‘em! What would you like, a dog or a pup?” she talks fast!

“Um..a puppy please,” James says.

“Ok, follow me,” she says, walking fast.

James and I rush to keep up with her.

She goes into another room, and up to a cage, unlocks it, and there is a happy, naughty-looking puppy in it. He is black with white paws and a white stripe on his chest, and he is full of energy. She puts him on a leash, and he wiggles all over.

She gives the leash to James, who takes it, nervously and happily.

“Ok then,” she says, “you can take him outside and walk him, ok?”

And she opens the back door, and lets James and his new puppy outside. The puppy tugs at the leash, and jumps forward, out the door, dragging James along behind him.

I see another room behind with bigger cages and just dogs. I feel curious.

I go up to the woman who is now feeding cats, quickly too. She does everything quickly.

“Why are those dogs back in there?” I ask.

“Oh, those dogs!” her voice is high and stressed, “Oh they are the TROUBLE dogs! They get into trouble.”

“Can I go in there and look at them?” I ask.

From what I can see, they don’t look any different.

“If you want,” she says uncertainly, shrugging her head. “I don’t have time to show you, but you can look at them.”

“Thank you,” I say.

I go into the back room. There are eight large cages on the floor, each with a dog inside and a sign in front with big black lettering with the name of the dog and ‘its problem.’

The first cage I see has a big yellow Labrador in it. He paces up and down, and runs around in circles, barking and yelping. He pauses a moment to look at me, drool coming out of his mouth, and grins. Then he suddenly whips around, and continues running in circles.

I look at his tag.
It says:

Dave
CHASES TAIL.

But, but, that's not a problem! I think. I wonder now what all the tags say.

I am curious now. I look at the next cage on the right of Dave. There is a big English sheepdog, with soft fluffy gray and white fur, and the softest-looking paws I've ever seen. I want to just hug him! He is so cute. He has a small pink bump on his forehead, and a fringe of hair in front of his curious black eyes. He keeps shaking his head, to get the hair out his eyes.

I look at his tag.

It reads:

Bruce
RUNS INTO WALLS.

What!

But, Bruce needs a haircut!

I'm totally interested now in reading the signs. The signs are all crazy! I look at the next pen, and I notice the dog is very quiet. She is still, and smiling at me, with the most gorgeous smile. She is a golden retriever, a bit small for her breed, and when she smiles at me, she opens her mouth, and I see she has a spotted tongue.

I look at her and then at the rest of the dogs. They are all barking, jumping, and yelling, scraping and pawing at the cages. Except for her.

She is sitting in her cage, like a dignified little lady. Her fur is soft and golden, and she looks very young.

Hmmm, I wonder. What will her sign say?

I walk up to the sign. She smiles big at me. I like her already.

I read the tag.

It says:

Taz
JUMPS FENCES.

Jumps fences?

That's her problem?

I can't believe it. I look at Taz. Taz grins at me. I look around.
All the dogs are still jumping, hootin' and hollerin'.

And Taz remains quiet and just gently smiles at me.

Hmmm, I think. These signs can't be right.

I smile at her and she smiles back.

I walk over to the attendant. Taz watches me, she seems sad to see me go.

"Can I walk one of the dogs in there, please?" I ask her.

"Yes," she says, though shaking her head, "But don't tell me I didn't warn ya. They're trouble DAWGS!" and she shakes her head like a mop at the last word.

She pulls out a long tan leash from a green cupboard on the left wall behind her.
I follow her. She walks rapidly up to the cages and pauses.

"Which one?" her voice is disinterested.

"Taz" I say quietly.

"Who?" she says, leaning forward and looking at the signs, and then looking back at me.

"Taz." I say.

She still does not know who that is. She leans forward, squinting to see the signs.

"The beautiful golden on the right there, by the English sheepdog," I said, looking in the direction of Taz, who is smiling benevolently at me, like a beam of golden sunshine.

The woman is leaning up against the cage of Bruce the sheepdog, and he excitedly licks her face. She moves away, wiping her mouth, and sees TAZ written on the sign next door.

“Ah, there she is!” she says, and opens the door.

Taz waits patiently, and does not run outside the open door.

The woman puts the leash on Taz and gives me the handle.

“She’s all yours now,” she says and steps aside.

I smile at Taz.

“Are you ready?” I ask.

She smiles big at me and follows me.

The attendant closes the door behind us and then,

She says, “Follow me. I’ll let you go outside and you can walk her.”

Taz and I follow her out to the back door, and she opens the door for us.

Taz looks up at me questioningly, and
I say, “Go ahead Taz.”

She trots out, obediently, her magnificent fluffy tail sashaying behind her, and I walk behind her.

The attendant watches us, surprised.

As we get outside, we see the end of a leash being dragged ahead of us. It disappears behind a big green bush.

“OUCH!”

Taz perks her ears up in interest, and I look too.

WHAT IS IT?

Behind the bush, comes abounding, rushing...

A WILD CRAZY HYPER BLACK PUPPY,

Followed by

Panting James!

Taz looks at the spectacle, very interested. She sits calmly besides me and waits.

James goes around us in three wild circles, following the crazy puppy that is running and cavorting around us like a fast car, barking and yelling excitedly. In between panting and chasing, James yells at me:

“HOW did you get her to be so quiet?”

I said, shrugging my shoulders, “I don’t know really.”

The puppy stops suddenly, his ears twitching as he gazes with playful interest at Taz, who sits there on the pavement, serenely gazing at the border collie. James stops too, happy for the pause and resting from the mad dashing.

“How is she so CALM?” he asks, his face red, looking at his wild playful puppy with a little fear, as the puppy suddenly pulls his ears back, ready to launch again.

“Oh no,” James groans, “here we go again!” as the puppy tugs on the leash and starts to run away again, “I can’t get him to STOP!”

Both Taz and I grin.

“Hey James...” I say, “I have an idea...Why don’t you walk Taz?”

“Aah...! That’s a great idea!” James says, getting happier, “You don’t mind?”

“No, of course not. Go for it,” I give him the leash, and Taz looks gently at me, watching patiently and then obediently trots over to James.

“Sit,” he says.

Taz sits.

She smiles at him.

The sunlight is bright on her.

James is mesmerized.

He smiles back.

He shakes his head vigorously.

“She’s LISTENING to me!” his voice is incredulous.

I smile at him.

“Of course she is,” I say gently.

“Here give me the other leash,” I say.

James happily hands over the other leash to me. I feel tugged by a tidal wave of explosive energy and I look down to see a small ball of wiggling black fur.

Amazing! How strong the little fella is!

The back door swings open, appropriately.

The attendant pokes her head out, chiming:

“How is everything going out there? Need anything? Want to try someone else?”

“No, we are good,” I say firmly, “But can you take the little guy back inside now? We’re going to walk Taz around now.”

“Ok,” the attendant says, and takes the leash from me, and the border collie pup bounds in the door ahead of her.

“But Taz is a trouble dog...” she says reluctantly...

“I know,” I say firmly.

She shakes her head and closes the door.

I come back to James to see him smiling delightedly below at Taz, whose face is lifted up towards him with a big gentle smile.

“She listens to me, Jan!” James says so excitedly.

“Yes James,” I say.

“She is SO good! And beautiful too! Look at her coat!” he says and Taz obediently turns around, giving me a full 360 degree view of her coat, smooth and shiny.

“Yes she is beautiful!” I say admiringly.

“Watch this!” he says.

“Sit Taz,” James says.

Taz sits.

“Let’s go for a walk now, eh?” James says, and starts to walk. Taz follows him right away.

“Sit,” he says.

Taz sits.

James looks at me and we both smile.

“I’m going to get her,” he says.

“Good idea. I hoped you’d like her,” I say.

We smile.

The door opens again, and the attendant pokes her head out again.

“How are you folks doing? Need any help?”

“We’re going to take her,” James says confidently.

“Ok,” the attendant says, shrugging her shoulders.

She holds open the door, and we follow her inside.

We sign the paper to take Taz and as we take her to the bus and open the door, James asks me, “So what did her card say?”

I say, “Taz: Jumps Fences.”

We laugh.

We get in the car, and James starts to drive away.

A few minutes later,

James says, “We need a better name for her. Taz isn’t so great...What about naming her after something we like..something you like! Like a favorite herb...How about Rosemary?”

I say, “Oh I like that! Good idea..”

Then, I add, “But wait! We can’t call her that all the time, it’s too long.”

James, “But what then?”

I say, “Hmm..how about Rosie?”

James says, “Rosie..Rosie...I like that!” He turns away from the wheel and looks behind at Taz who is paying attention to every word.

“Rosie?” he says.

She perks her head up.

“Taz?” he asks again.

She looks away.

“Did you see that, Jan?” James says.

“Yes honey I did,” I say.

“Rosie?” he says.

Taz turns and looks at him with interest.

“Rosie it is then!” James says, happily.

I nod my head in agreement.

Rosie nods her head too.

And grins.

So that’s how Taz became Rosie.