

THE PUPPY PLACE

EDWARD



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For Rose and Edward
and for Khea, with love

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ISBN 978-1-338-21263-1

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 18 19 20 21 22

Printed in the U.S.A. 40

First printing 2018

CHAPTER ONE

“What do you think of these?” Lizzie Peterson held out a pair of pajamas to show her friend Maria. They were covered in blue and green polka dots and had big purple buttons down the front.

Maria raised her eyebrows. “Very cute,” she said. “But I’m not sure they’re exactly—‘you.’”

Lizzie sighed. None of the pajamas in this store were really “her.” “Maybe we should try another store,” she said. She saw Maria raise her eyebrows again. Oh, her best friend knew her so well! Maria knew that another store wouldn’t make any difference. The fact was, Lizzie was not really a pajama person. She liked to wear a T-shirt and

boxer shorts to bed, or a long-sleeved shirt and sweatpants when it was cold. She had never really understood the whole idea of pajamas. Why did you need special clothes for bed? Why couldn't you just wear regular clothes?

"You could just wear a T-shirt and some leggings or something," Maria said.

"Right, and be the only person on Pajamarama Day who's not in pajamas?" Lizzie asked. "I don't think so." Pajamarama was going to be a big deal at Littleton Elementary, where Lizzie and Maria were in fourth grade. Everybody was talking about it already. On the last Friday in September, everybody was going to wear pajamas to school—even the principal, Ms. Guzman, and Mr. Wood, the janitor. Plus, that night the whole fourth grade was going to have a sleepover at school.

Lizzie wasn't even sure why Pajamarama was a thing. It was bad enough that people had special



clothes for sleeping—now they were all going to wear them to school? What was the point? She sighed and put the polka-dot pajamas back on the rack. Maybe she should just wear the one pair of pajamas that she did own, the purple ones with a design of little red dogs. She'd had them for years, so they were pretty worn out and they didn't fit perfectly anymore, but at least they were "her." They had dogs on them, and Lizzie was all about dogs.

Lizzie had been dog-crazy for as long as she could remember. Besides the pajamas, she had dog-themed socks, sweatshirts, underpants, and even scrunchies. She had a huge collection of dog books and dog posters. She volunteered at the local animal shelter, helped out at her aunt's doggy day care, and even had her own very successful dog-walking business (Maria was one of the partners). Not only that, she had convinced

her parents that their family should foster puppies. That meant that she and her younger brothers, Charles and the Bean, had taken care of dozens of young dogs who needed their help. Every puppy only stayed a little while, until the Petersons found it the perfect forever home.

Well, every puppy but Buddy. Buddy had started out as a foster puppy, but now he was a member of the family. Lizzie loved her little brown puppy more than anything in the world. Knowing that Buddy would always be hers made up for having to say good-bye to all of the other puppies she helped foster. “I wish I could find pajamas with pictures of Buddy on them,” she said to Maria now. “Wouldn’t that be the best? Especially if they showed the little white heart-shaped spot on his chest.”

Maria smiled. “Maybe you can find a website



where you could get some made. But probably not in time for Pajamarama.”

Lizzie rolled her eyes. “Maybe I just won’t go to school on Pajamarama Day,” she said.

“Oh, come on,” Maria said. “It’s going to be fun. Can you imagine what kind of wacky p.j.’s Ms. Guzman will come up with?”

Lizzie knew Maria was right. She went back to flipping through the pajama rack, but lost interest almost right away. “We can come back another day,” she said. “There’s plenty of time.” She headed out of the store, with Maria following her.

They walked up Main Street toward Lucky Dog Books, where they were going to meet Lizzie’s mom. The air was crisp and the sky was blue, and Lizzie’s spirits lifted right away. The sun felt warm on her face as she strolled down the street. “Hi, Lizzie,” said Mrs. DeMaio, who was sweeping

the sidewalk in front of the little grocery store she owned. “How’s Buddy?”

“He’s great,” Lizzie said. She loved it that Buddy was such a celebrity in their town. She wished she had him with her right now. Everybody liked Buddy, and she loved stopping into stores with him. She knew that Jerry Small, the owner of the bookstore, was a special fan. He would give her a big biscuit to take home to Buddy.

They passed the corner gas station where her dad had once found an abandoned puppy in a cardboard box. “Poor little Snowball,” said Lizzie. “I remember when we brought him home. He was so dirty and skinny!” He had been one of the Petersons’ first foster puppies, and once they had cleaned him up and fed him, he was one of the cutest—fluffy and white. They had found Snowball a perfect home. Lizzie smiled as she walked along, thinking about it.



Then she saw something that made her lose her smile. She stopped short in the middle of the sidewalk. “Do you see what I see?” she asked Maria. She pointed to the yellow VW Beetle they had just passed, parked in front of the drugstore. The back windows were open, but just barely. A small black puppy stood on the backseat, his front legs up on the car door. His flat, wrinkly nose reached for the crack at the top of the window. He panted hard. His pink tongue hung out, and his bulgy black eyes gave his face a frightened look.

“Poor little pug!” Lizzie said, poking a finger through the window to pet his wet nose. The puppy snuffled at her finger, then gave it a lick. “Argh!” said Lizzie. “This makes me so mad.”

