

## (CHAPTER ONE

# THE BOAT

THUMP!

My eyes flew open beneath bushy brown eyebrows. My ears flicked to high alert.

‘OW!’

I relaxed, the pained voice sounded very familiar.

Getting to my paws I shuffled forward and peered around the entrance to my kennel. One-Eyed Rose sat outside, pulling a face as she rubbed her head.

‘Wow! Hello Misty,’ she winced, ‘I bashed into your house.’

‘I suppose you were running around sniffing at this and sniffing at that...’

‘Not looking where I was going!’ she interrupted.

‘...as usual,’ I continued. One-Eyed Rose always runs around sniffing at this and that.

She stood up a little unsteadily, her shaggy spaniel ears dragging on the ground.

‘Are you alright?’ I asked. But One-Eyed Rose is never anything else.

She wagged her tail enthusiastically as though nothing had happened, although a big lump had appeared through the scruffy brown fur on top of her head.

‘So what shall we do today?’ One-Eyed Rose looked at me through her one good eye.

She had been squashed by the school bus when she was a puppy. Even then she never looked where she was going. The vet people fixed her really well, but they couldn’t mend her eye, so now she bumps into things a lot.

‘Perhaps we should try to find Bertie,’ I replied. Bertie is one of our friends. ‘He was going for a walk along the canal.’

## DOGNAPPED!

'Wow! I like the canal, there are plenty of things to sniff.' One-Eyed Rose scampered off to find Bertie.

I stretched out my front legs, white socked paws flat along the ground. I arched my back and shifted forward to stretch my hind legs.

I shook myself from head to bushy tail so my shiny black and white fur fell back neatly. We Border collies are very particular about our appearance.

Smoothing out my bib I licked a stubborn tuft of fur into place and ambled off after my dizzy friend.

Bertie sat on the tow path. One-Eyed Rose stood beside him. Both had their heads tilted to one side, concentrating hard as they stared at a narrow-boat which was moored alongside. The boat was coloured in shades of blue with lots of windows along the sides.

'Hi guys, what's happening?' I asked as I got nearer.

'Wow! You'll never guess, Misty,' One-Eyed Rose ran around in excited circles.

'Guess what?'

One-Eyed Rose looked puzzled, 'I'm not sure. You'd better ask Bertie.'

Bertie is a small brown terrier. He is always smartly dressed with a bone-patterned scarf instead of a collar. Bertie is very old, so he knows a lot of things about a lot of things. He looked deep in thought as he stroked his long grey whiskers.

'OOOOwww!'

I jumped at the noise coming from the boat, my fur standing on end.

'Wow!' One-Eyed Rose stood still for a second, 'It happened again!'

Bertie turned to look at me, 'That noise keeps coming from the chimney,' he pointed a paw at a long black tube sticking from the roof.

'It's very scary!' shouted One-Eyed Rose, 'Let's go and see what it is.'

'Be careful, Rose,' I warned her.

Our friend wasn't easily frightened. She scurried to the boat and tried to jump onto the roof. She failed at the first attempt; and the second. After the third clumsy landing, she lay panting on the grassy bank. 'It's too high,' she complained.

Bertie considered the problem. 'You need something to stand on,' he announced.

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I grimaced as One-Eyed Rose stuck her paw in my ear. She squashed my nose as she tried to balance on my back. 'It's still too high,' she shouted, jumping up and down trying to scramble onto the roof.

'Rose, you're messing up my fur!' I grunted as she landed on top of me again.

Bertie stroked his long grey whiskers harder, 'You need something taller; where's Rascal?'

One-Eyed Rose tumbled to the ground, 'I haven't seen him.'

'Nor me,' I shrugged.

'He was here not long ago,' Bertie peered along the towpath. 'Just before that noise started.'

'OOoowww!' moaned the chimney.

