

Chapter One

“I’m coming to get you!” Becky Nolan called. Her two-year-old Labrador retriever, Bear, whuffed excitedly behind his mouthful of purple octopus toy and barreled down the porch steps.

Becky leaped down the steps after Bear and grabbed hold of two of the stuffed octopus’s legs, pulling the toy toward her as her dog set his legs and growled playfully.

They yanked the octopus back and forth for a few seconds, until Bear suddenly dropped his head and whined softly.

Becky automatically let go of the stuffed toy and reached for Bear. “What’s the matter, sweetie?” she asked softly, patting his glossy black side. “What’s up, boy?”



Bear danced backward out of reach, the octopus clutched triumphantly in his mouth. His eyes were shining and he was grinning a big doggy grin: Becky was sure that he was laughing at her.

“That dog is so the boss of you,” Becky’s best friend, Charlotte, said from the porch. She was laughing at Becky, too. “Look at how he outwitted you.”

“Naughty boy,” Becky said. She lunged playfully toward him, but Bear quickly dodged away from her. A minivan pulled up in front of the house. From inside, Charlotte’s mom waved to them.

“Gotta go,” Charlotte said, pulling her backpack onto her shoulders and tightening her ponytail. “See you at school tomorrow.”

Becky stared at the minivan with dismay. “You just got here!” she complained.

Charlotte laughed. “We did homework together and made brownies and you showed me your new clothes and we talked and played with Bear,” she reminded Becky. “I’ve been here for ages.”

“I know,” Becky agreed. “I just miss hanging out with you all the time.”

The year before, when Becky’s family first moved to this town, her family had rented an apartment on