



Flurry of Activity

Chapter 6

A dog?" Arne wrinkled his forehead. "Here?" Arne, Mom, and I were waiting for Gwynn's skating lesson to finish. Gwynn looked like she was dancing ballet, gliding smoothly across the ice as she curved her arms in a wide arc.

I turned to Arne. "You said that I should have a project where I get better at something. I want to work with a dog," I announced. "The search and rescue dogs are totally incredible. They work so hard, and they're so enthusiastic about it." I wanted to add that the bond between Ellen and Mojo was something I wanted, too, but because he hadn't been there, I wasn't sure he'd understand. I stuck to the idea of learning a special skill. "The dogs go through a lot of training. They're amazing."

"Well . . . some dogs are amazing," said Arne. "Some dogs are not. When I was a boy, my parents got a dog that we had to give away. He wouldn't stop biting. He bit my sister." Arne scratched his ear. "The dog's name was Astro."

Corinne

"I do think families today are a lot better about training dogs than when we were kids," said Mom. "We can always hire a trainer if we run into problems."

Arne didn't shake his head or nod. He wobbled his head from side to side. "Mmmmm. That is true."

"So can we go to the shelter?" I asked. I held my breath.

Mom leaned over and whispered in Arne's ear. He nodded. "Maybe, we can sort of go look," he said. "But Corinne, this is a visit just for looking. Not deciding."

"What are we looking at?" asked Gwynn, coming off the ice.

"I want to train a search and rescue dog," I told her. "So I need a dog." Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Arne's shoulders droop.

"Ooh!" said Gwynn. "Yes! A dog! I've always wanted a dog." She took off her headband. Her cheeks were red from working hard. "Alysa Liu has a dog."

"I didn't know you wanted a dog," I said.

"You were supposed to know that through sister brain," said Gwynn, folding her arms.

"Ah," I said. "That explains a lot."



When we arrived at the animal shelter, I saw some people wearing ski patrol jackets loading bags of food

Flurry of Activity

into a van. "Hey!" I said. "That's the same jacket that Ellen wears." It felt like a sign that I was supposed to get a dog!

"Mm-hmm," said Arne. He did not seem very excited to be at the shelter.

I asked the man at the front desk about the ski patrollers outside. "The food for the search and rescue dogs is delivered here," he explained. "We work with them all the time."

"I want a dog I can train to do search and rescue," I explained.

The man, whose name was Kurt, smiled. "Well, let's see who might be a good candidate!"

We followed Kurt through a door to where the dogs were kept. As we walked by each cage, Gwynn let out a long sigh. "Ooh, how about that dog?" she said. A small Chihuahua looked up at us.

"Mmm," said Arne. "I think I would rather a bigger dog." This was a good sign. It meant Arne was actually taking this seriously.

"I think I need a bigger dog to be a rescue dog," I added.

Kurt agreed. "Chihuahuas are really meant to be companions, not working dogs," he explained.

Another kennel had two dogs. "They're a bonded pair," said Kurt. "That means they have a very close relationship and we want them to be adopted together."

"I don't think we're quite ready for that," said Mom.

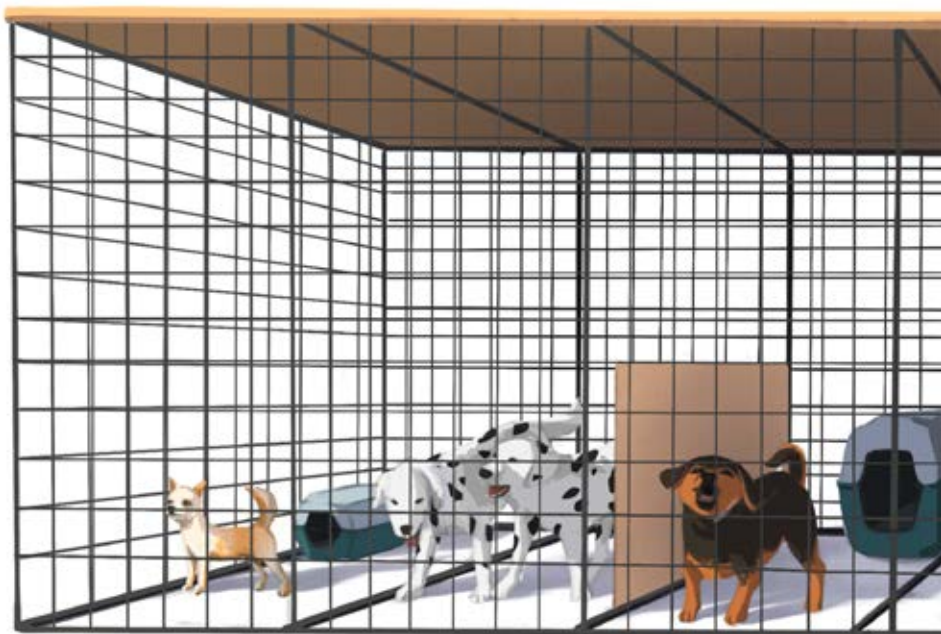
Corinne

I knew I was lucky to be looking for one dog, so I didn't argue, though the dogs did look very cute curled around each other.

The dog in the next kennel barked furiously at us. "This dog should go to a home with no children," said Kurt. "We're still working on some of his behaviors."

I stood in front of the kennel for a moment, wondering if I could calm the dog down. The card on the cage said his name was Oscar. "It's okay, Oscar," I said soothingly. Oscar stopped barking for about five seconds and then started again.

"Definitely not," said Arne. He barely stopped to look at Oscar. I knew that Arne was right, but the way he said it



Flurry of Activity

made me wince. He didn't even give Oscar a tiny chance. What if Gwynn or I did something that made him feel like just walking away?

I was starting to wonder whether any of the dogs might be right for us, when we stopped at the last cage in the row. The most beautiful dog I'd ever seen looked back at us. I checked the name tag. Her name was Flurry, which made sense because she had a snowy-white nose, feet, and belly, as if she'd just leaped into a pile of snow. Flurry looked like she was smiling at us. As we approached, she stood and walked right up to me.

"We think she was abandoned," said Kurt. "She is definitely used to being with people. She's young. We're guessing around six months."

I held up my hand and let Flurry sniff it. A soft pink tongue darted out and licked my finger.

I'd only felt this way one other time in my life: the day Gwynn was born. I remember going to the hospital and Dad putting me in his lap before a nurse handed Gwynn to us. She

was small and pink with fuzzy, dark hair. Before that moment, I didn't know I could love someone that much. I loved Mom and Dad, but they'd always been



Corinne

there. Meeting Gwynn was the first time I remembered the moment when love started.

Now, meeting Flurry was the second. I stroked her soft fur through the cage. She stood up on her hind legs and pressed her front paws against the bars between us.

"We have a room where you can get to know each other," said Kurt. "Are you comfortable with dogs?"

"Eh, I don't know," said Arne. He stepped back, away from Flurry and me. "We only meant to come look."

"That's what we said. Just to look. A dog is a big responsibility," said Mom, though she did not sound quite as certain as Arne. "And we're about to have some big changes."

"So what's one more?" I asked. I thought my heart was going to burst. Flurry was meant for us, I just knew it. Mom and Arne had said that we were only coming to look, but I hadn't known that we were going to look at Flurry. I tried to say more but my throat felt too tight.

Arne started toward the exit and took out his phone, ready to move on.

"No!" said Gwynn. "We have to go to the room." She pointed at me. "Cori's heart will be sad, and then mine will be, too. The only thing stronger than sister brain is sister *heart*." She lifted her right foot and set it down next to her left so there was no room in between them. Not quite a stomp, but I knew what it meant. I'd seen it many times in

Flurry of Activity

grocery stores and the library. Gwynn wasn't going to move.

Arne turned away from us so we couldn't see his face. I had a teacher who used to do that right before she yelled at us. But Arne didn't yell when he turned back around. His eyes were smiling but his mouth was a wavy line. He looked at Mom. Mom lifted her shoulders slightly and smiled.

"Yes," he said. "Of course. We will go to the room to meet this dog properly."

The room was plain, painted green, with a few toys in it. There were some low benches for us to sit on, and Flurry went from person to person, getting to know us. She picked up a rope toy and brought it to me as if to say, *Play with me!* I tugged on my end and she pulled back, tail wagging. She sat on Mom's foot and leaned back so Mom could scratch behind her ears. She thumped her foot when Gwynn rubbed her tummy, and then she brought a ball to Gwynn.

She went to Arne last. I held my breath.

Flurry stood in front of Arne and looked at him. "Hey, hey," said Arne softly. They both looked like they were trying to make up their minds about each other.

Flurry sat down right in front of Arne. Then she stuck out her paw, like a person offering to shake hands. A smile broke out over Arne's face.

"Oh my," said Arne. "Such nice manners!" He took

Corinne

Flurry's paw and bobbed it up and down a few times. Then he petted her awkwardly on the head. Gwynn and I exchanged a glance, not daring to say a word. What would happen next?

Arne looked at Mom, and Mom smiled. "I guess the dog is a wedding present?" said Arne.

Gwynn raised her arms up in the air. "Yes!" Gwynn and I grabbed each other and started jumping up and down. Then Flurry joined us, barking. I think she knew she had a new home!

That night, Flurry curled up in a circle between our beds after sniffing the entire room, and Gwynn and I watched her sleep. I couldn't believe she was ours. Maybe if Gwynn hadn't said anything, we wouldn't have made it to the green room. Maybe if Flurry hadn't offered her paw, we'd be home without her. But everything had happened just right. Flurry was a member of our family.

Arne hadn't wanted to get her right away, but he seemed okay now. He even smiled when we stopped at the pet store to get a bed, a collar, and some food. Part of me couldn't help wondering, though, what would happen if things didn't go right, if Flurry did something wrong. Would Arne change his mind again?