



Summer Pet Friends

FEATURING **TABBY™**

BY LAURA LEIGH MOTTE
ILLUSTRATED BY GÉRALDINE CHARETTE



our
generation®

This is Tabby's story.



T A B B Y TM

SUMMER PET
FRIENDS

BY

LAURA LEIGH MOTTE

ILLUSTRATED BY GÉRALDINE CHARETTE

An Our Generation® book

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EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

*Big words, wacky words, powerful words, funny words...
what do they all mean? They are marked with this symbol *.
Look them up in the Glossary at the end of this book.*

Chapter One

FREEDOM!

It was the last day of school. The classroom was so hot we had to open all the windows. The breeze smelled like lilacs. A squirrel jumped on the window ledge. He chirped and squeaked as if to say, “Hello, Tabby.” But I was too busy to chat.

I was packing up my desk: drawings and binders and half-used crayons. I did my best to fit them all into my backpack. My poster on The Cycle of Water was so big that I had to roll it up with an elastic. Jackson was measuring his paper-mâché* volcano with a ruler. He wanted to see if it would fit into a milk crate. Meanwhile, Zack and Ali were turning old math tests into paper airplanes.

“So long, school!” Ali hollered, flinging his airplane across the room. It flew right over Elliot’s





head.

“Whoa, did you see that?” Zack shouted.

But Elliot didn’t notice. He was too busy explaining to Mrs. Pleasant why he couldn’t return his book to the classroom library.

“Your dog ate it?” Mrs. Pleasant repeated Elliot’s words.

Elliot turned red. “Well, mostly he just chewed on it. Maybe he ate a little, too. It’s hard to tell.”

Mrs. Pleasant folded her arms and frowned. She probably thought he’d lost the book, and was lying.

But I knew at least one thing was true. Elliot *did* have a dog. I could see the fur on his hoodie. It was long and wavy. I tried to guess what kind of dog he had. *Poodle?* No, they don’t shed. *Golden retriever?* *Australian shepherd?*

I know a lot about dogs. I love dogs. Actually, I love all animals. Mom says that the first time I saw a chipmunk, I pointed and said “*fwiend.*” I feel that way about all animals. I must



have read *1001 Fun Facts about Pets* a thousand and one times. I had returned it to the classroom library that very morning—without a single page chewed. Then I remembered something I’d read in the book.

“Puppies like to chew!” I blurted out. “It’s how they explore their world. Sometimes they do it because their teeth hurt. The chewing makes them feel better.”

“Thank you, Tabby.” Mrs. Pleasant unfolded her arms and looked at Elliot. “Can I see the book?”

Elliot opened his desk and pulled it out. The cover was missing a corner piece.

“It’s not too bad,” said Mrs. Pleasant. “With a little tape, I think I can repair it. At least your dog didn’t eat any of the inside pages.”

“That’s because he’d already eaten a sock,” said Elliot. “He was full.”

I went back to clearing out my desk. My mind was full of questions about Elliot’s pup. A song boomed over the school loudspeaker. It was



“Vacation Nation” by Illyah Jones.

“I love this song!” Monica squealed. She jumped up and started dancing. Ali and Zack drummed on their desks with their markers. Edyta picked up a dry erase brush and used it as a microphone. She sang along to the chorus.

“Vacation, vacation

Let’s dance across the nation...”

Everyone started talking about their summer vacations.

“I’m going camping in Australia in an RV!” said Lin. (She’s my best friend.)

“I’m going to Alaska to visit my grandparents,” said Prisha. (She’s my other best friend.)

“I’m going to Hawaii to see a real-life volcano,” said Jackson. (He’s not my friend because he’s a boy and I don’t play with boys.)

As he pumped his fist, he knocked over his paper-mâché volcano. It broke into a gazillion pieces. Jackson shrugged. “Who cares! I’m going to see a real one anyway!”



Everyone laughed. Everyone was excited.
Everyone was happy.
Everyone but me.



Chapter Two

SUMMER BUMMER

Now, you might find what I am about to say a bit shocking, but I have to say it anyway. Here goes.

I like school. I also like homework. And this part isn't so shocking, but it's important too. I like my school friends. When school ends, friends scatter. Everybody goes their own way.

My family can't go on summer vacation. My parents have to work. Dad runs a bike rental and surf shop. Our town, Ocean Crest, is in New Jersey, right next to the Atlantic Ocean. We have two big sandy beaches and lots of bike paths. Tourists come from all over—some of them as far as Canada—to surf and bike.

Mom is busy too. She makes homemade jams. She has a booth at the Ocean Side Market



on Thursdays and Saturdays. It's called *American Jam Stand*. People drive for miles for her famous *Blueberry Bliss* jam.

But as busy as we are in Ocean Crest in the summer, it can also be a little lonely with no friends to play with. This summer was going to be even worse than usual because my two best friends were leaving for the ENTIRE SUMMER!

I sighed and crumpled up a flower painting that I actually had wanted to keep. I tossed it in the garbage.

That's when it happened. The moment that would change my summer forever.

Maybe it was the music and the dancing. Or maybe she just wanted to go on vacation too. Whatever the reason, Clementine, the class goldfish, leapt out of her tank. She landed on Rina's desk. Rina screamed. Clementine twitched her tail helplessly.

Mrs. Pleasant was in the hallway on a stepladder, taking down artwork. Lin ran to fetch her, but I knew there was no time to waste. I raced



over to Rina's desk, and, very gently, picked up Clementine and plopped her back in her tank.

Clementine didn't move for a whole minute. She just lay on her side at the top of the tank. Mrs. Pleasant, who was now back in the classroom, looked worried. Everyone in the whole class held their breath.

I leaned over the tank and whispered. "Come on, Clem. Don't give up!"

After a few seconds, she flipped over and started swimming around her tank like nothing had happened.

"Hooray! Tabby's a hero! She saved Clementine's life!" everyone shouted.

"I could never pick up a slimy fish. You're so brave," said Prisha.

"For this," declared Mrs. Pleasant, "Tabby deserves the very special honor."

Very special honor? I felt my heart race. This sounded big.

"I've decided that you can be the one to take Clementine home for the summer."



I burst into a smile. I had asked her a few weeks ago, but she said there was another interested student. We were going to draw straws* at the end of the day.

Mrs. Pleasant looked across the room. “Is that all right with you, Marshal? You can have the class cactus.”

Marshal looked relieved. “At least that won’t leap out of its pot!”

“Yeah. That could get a little prickly,” I joked. We all laughed. Then I looked at Clementine. “It’s you and me, now, for the whole summer!”

Clementine swam in fast circles around her bowl. I could tell she was excited.

So that’s how it all began. My very first job as a summer pet-sitter.

Little did I know that things would snowball*, or maybe I should say “furball” out of control...





Chapter Three

FAIRBANKS

“I don’t see him!” Prisha whimpered. She was lying on her tummy, peering underneath the green sofa. “What if he’s stuck, or caught in one of those springy things?”

“He’s not stuck,” I said.

“How do you know?”

I shrugged. “I just do.”

I was at Prisha’s house. We only had seventeen and a half hours left to spend together before she left on vacation. I wanted to make the most of it.

“Come on, Fairbanks,” she pleaded, her nose still under the sofa.

Fairbanks is Prisha’s pet rabbit. He’s fluffy and white like snow. That’s why they call him Fairbanks, after the city in Alaska which is the coldest city in America. It’s also where her



grandparents live.

I love Fairbanks (the bunny—not the city). Prisha had let him out of his cage so he could roam around. But now he wasn't coming back.

I looked under the sofa. It was dark and dusty and so low that we couldn't reach under it. Fairbanks had picked a great hiding spot.

“He could starve to death under there!” Prisha moaned. “What can we do?”

“Just ignore him,” I replied. “Want to learn how to whistle?” I rolled off my tummy and sat up, my back resting against the bottom of the sofa.

“Since when can you whistle?” Prisha asked.

“Since my dad taught me. It's easy. You just make your lips into a tiny circle and blow. Like this.” But when I did it, all that came out was air.

“Wait, I got this...” I tried again. I huffed and puffed. I could feel myself turning pink, but I kept trying.

“Let *me* try.” Prisha puckered her lips and blew. She huffed and puffed like someone trying to blow up a very large balloon. We both burst into



laughter.

While we were laughing, Fairbanks wiggled out from under the sofa and over to Prisha. He sniffed at her hair.

“Fairbanks!” Prisha cried, picking him up in her hands.

“I knew he’d come out on his own. Once we relaxed, he relaxed too.”

“You really are great with animals.” Prisha looked into my eyes and gasped. “Oh my gosh, Tabby! You’re perfect!”

“Perfect?” I was confused.

“For taking care of Fairbanks. I’m going to my grandparents for the summer. Remember?”

I nodded and my heart sank. *How could I forget?* I looked gloomily at the clock. Only sixteen hours left.

“My aunt was supposed to take care of Fairbanks, but then she got a cat, and cats and bunnies don’t get along. Can you babysit Fairbanks? You always know just what he needs. Plus, he’ll really like Clementine! I’m sure of it.”





Prisha dropped to her knees, curled her hands like paws, and whimpered. Her doggy-begging pose gets me every time.

I picked up Fairbanks. He nuzzled against my neck. And just like that, my sadness turned to excitement. Maybe I wouldn't be so lonely this summer after all. Now I had *two* animal friends to love.

“All right. But I have to ask my—”

Prisha threw her arms around me. “Thanks, Tabby! You're the best. Knowing he's with you, I won't worry at all!”

I walked back to my house. This time, *I* was the one who was worried.



Chapter Four

THE BATHROOM HABITS OF OLDER SISTERS

Let me tell you about my problem with pets.

Actually, it's not a pet problem. It's a sister problem. Edwina—she's my sister—is allergic to pet fur. We found out two years ago when we got a kitten. We'd wanted a dog at first, but Dad said no. He said no to a gerbil, a guinea pig, and a baby tiger too. Mom says he just wants what's best for us. *I think he just likes to say no.*

We'd only got the kitten because Dad was out of town the Sunday we saw the “Free Kittens” sign in the church parking lot. I peeked in the box—there was only one kitten left.

“What kind of a cat is it?” I asked.

“She's a tabby*,” said the lady who was giving away the kittens.

“Just like me!” I gasped.



The kitten put its' paws up on the edge of the box and looked at me. It made a loud *meoowwwwww!* I knew exactly what it wanted.

I picked up the kitten. It was gray and fluffy and no bigger than my hand.

“Mom, can we please have her? Please?” I handed her the kitten.

The kitten purred and rubbed its' head against her chin. “Meow.”

Dad was surprised when he came home and found a kitten napping in his favorite chair.

“I go away for a few days and, *poof*, just like that, we have a kitten?”

“Yep,” I said. That’s when it came to me. “Let’s call her Poof!” (Though we’d had the kitten for several days, none of us could agree on a name.)

“Yes!” Edwina said. “Poof the Majestic Ball of Floof!”

We all adored Poof. We played with her, fed her, scooped up after her, and even took turns sleeping with her.

Then it happened. After a few weeks, Edwina’s



nose started to run, her eyes itched, and she burst into red dots called hives. She was allergic. The doctor said Poof had to go.

My friend Lin offered to take her. It was sad, but at least we knew Poof would have a good home with Lin and her family. A week later, Edwina's red dots went away.

Since that time, we never talked about having another pet. My family had only let me pet-sit Clementine because she's a goldfish and goldfish don't have fur. But what would they think about me having Fairbanks?

I sat down at my desk and turned on my tablet. I searched for "rabbits." Fairbanks was a "Hulstlander." I typed in the name carefully. It wasn't easy. It's not every day you see a word with so many consonants* packed together.

I hoped Hulstlander rabbits were like goldfish, in that a person couldn't be allergic to them, even though they have fur. I'd read in my pet books that poodles and certain breeds of cat are hypoallergenic*. But what about a Hulstlander rabbit? Were they



hypoallergenic too?

They aren't.

But there are things you can do to help. I took out a pen and made notes. Here's what I jotted down.

- Hulstlander rabbits can live up to 8—10 years.
- They can only ever be white.
- They are very playful and love humans.
- They are very smart. They can learn tricks and even how to use a litter box!

Though school was out for the summer, I was creating my own homework. Pet homework!

I could hear Edwina in the bathroom. We share it. I have a door on my side and she has a door on her side. She spends a lot of time in there. Dad calls it her office.

“Want to see a goldfish jump?” I asked, knocking on the door.

“I'm doing my nails!” she shouted from the



other side of the door.

Edwina is really into her appearance. She has all sorts of shampoos, spray-on hair colors, and nail polishes, which I'm not allowed to try.

“But it's super cute. She makes a big splash and everything!”

“I'm good,” Edwina chirped.

“What about a bunny? Would you want to see a bunny binky*?” I asked.

Before I could explain what a bunny binky was, Edwina turned on the hair dryer. It made a loud humming sound.

I sighed. I love my sister, but ever since she turned thirteen, she's been too busy to play with me. I guess she likes hanging out in the bathroom more than playing *The Fabulous Lives of Dolls* with me. For my last birthday, she gave me her dollhouse. It's a nice gift, but I liked it better when the dollhouse was in her room, and we played *together*.

Mom says it has something to do with growing up which I don't understand at all. I think





you can enjoy watching a fish jump at any age.

I held a flake of fish food above Clementine's bowl. She jumped and snatched it from my fingers. I smiled and dangled another flake. She jumped again.

When I heard my mom come home, I put down the fish food, and headed for the door. Then I stopped. I grabbed my yellow scarf and laid it over the top of the fishbowl.

“No jumping when I'm not here, missy. Got it? We don't want a repeat of what happened on the Last Day of School. That was a close call!”

Clementine swam to the bottom of her bowl. I think she understood.



Mom was in the dining room, sticking labels on jam jars. Market Day was tomorrow, and she had to be ready. I was helping. Sticking labels is harder than you might think. You have to make sure they are straight. And if you don't get them



right the first time, you have to rip them off, and start all over.

We were almost finished when Edwina skipped downstairs.

“Want to see my new nail polish?” She plopped down on a chair and put her feet up on the table. “See how the lime green color really pops with my new sandals?”

“Very pretty,” I said. She’d braided her hair—something she used to let me do—though I would have used a lime green elastic, to match. *So there!*

“Feet off the table, please,” said Mom. Edwina sighed and put her feet down on the chair beside her.

A few moments later, Dad came in the front door, whistling. He was happy because his shop just got mentioned in a well-known travel guide.

“Congratulations, dear,” Mom said, giving him a kiss.

This was my moment.

“I have some good news too!” I chimed in. “Prisha asked me to babysit Fairbanks for the



summer.”

There was a pause. Dad opened his mouth to speak...

“...Before you say no,” I jumped in. “I’ve done some homework. I found a blog. It’s written by a girl who is allergic and has a pet rabbit. She says there’s lots of things you can do to help. Like keeping the pet in your room with the door closed, and vacuuming and sweeping. I’ll even change my socks going in and out of the room and use a roller brush after I hold him. That’s what she does. I’ll keep the cage extra clean too!”

“What if it’s not enough?” Mom asked, fixing a crooked jam label. “And Edwina has a bad reaction all the same?”

“I thought of that, too. If there’s a problem, Prisha’s cousin in Cape Cove County will take Fairbanks.”

Mom looked at Dad.

“You know my vote,” he said.

“Why?!!” I moaned.

“Maybe the cousin in Cape Cove County



loves rabbits?” Dad gave me a cute smile but I wasn’t going to fall for it.

“Please?” Then I put on the saddest puppy dog-begging face I could manage. I’d learned from Prisha how to get it just right.

“Everyone I know is going away this summer. I’ll be all alone!”

“What about Clementine?” Dad asked.

“She’s a fish and you can’t pet a fish. Fairbanks can be another friend. A cuddly one I can hold in my hands.”

Mom turned to Edwina. “Edwina? What do you think about Tabby taking care of Fairbanks this summer?”

“Sure, whatever,” she said, without looking up from her toenails. “Tabby’s got this. I’m going to drama camp anyway. I won’t even be here most of the time. Besides, that allergy doctor said I was allergic to cats and dogs. He didn’t say anything about rabbits.”

I looked at Dad. He shrugged. It wasn’t a yes, but it wasn’t a no either. Then I looked at



Mom.

“All right,” she said. “We can try.”

I ran over and gave her a big hug. “Oh my gosh! Thank you!” Then I hugged Edwina.

“Save it for the bunny rabbit!” she said, laughing. But I only squeezed harder. My sister had saved the day.



Chapter Five

SEAGULLS, DOVES, PARROTS AND PARAKEETS

I like going to the market with my mother. We get there early when everyone is setting up. We say hello and sip hot drinks from thermos cups. There are no cars yet, so you can hear the soft woosh of the ocean on the other side of the road, and the cry of seagulls.

“How’s the coffee this morning, Tabby?” Naoki asked me. He was chopping vegetables in his food truck.

“Strong,” I tell him, taking a huge gulp and grinning at him. Naoki knows my thermos is actually filled with hot chocolate that I like to pretend is coffee. But he keeps my secret. That’s Naoki: secret-keeper and homemade-vegan*-sausage-maker.

A seagull fluttered down, hovering over. He



was asking for food. But I never feed wild animals. Fact #32 of *1001 Fun Facts about Pets* is that wild animals need to preserve their natural survival instincts*.

“Sorry birdie, I have no food for you, but I wish you lots of luck in your fishing! There’s a good spot by the pier. Third rock from the left!” The seagull flew off as if it understood.

When nine o’clock rolls around, customers arrive. The heat rises, and our quiet place becomes a noisy, exciting marketplace. Customers have to shout so we can hear their orders.

American Jam Stand has plenty of regular customers—Mom’s jam is that good.

I am especially good with tourists. I tell them where to find the best spots to swim and which beaches are dog-friendly. I also tell them which vendor* sells the best veggie dogs (it’s Naoki).

Mom hands out samples. I watch the people taste. Their reactions are always the same.

“Oh my,” and “Wow,” and “This is divine!” But today I heard a new one.



“Ambrosia!”

“What’s that?” I asked the woman who said it. She was wearing big blue sunglasses and a feathery yellow shawl. She looked like a parrot!

“The food and drink of the gods,” she said. “Served to them by doves.”

“Doves made a nest in our tree last year,” I told her, “but I don’t remember them eating anything but worms.”

The woman laughed, then picked up a jar of Mom’s jam and looked at it.

“These little jars of *Blueberry Bliss* would be perfect!” she exclaimed. Turns out she’s an event planner from New York City with an important wedding coming up.

“The bride is being bold and wearing a purple dress,” she explained, “so I’m creating a color theme to work around that detail.”

Mom laughed. “I’ve never sold a jam because it matched somebody’s dress!”

“It’s not just *somebody*.” The woman leaned over and whispered into Mom’s ear. Mom gasped.





“As in, the famous model?” The woman’s eyes twinkled behind her pink-tinted glasses.

“Can you make me two hundred and fifty jars for August?” My mouth dropped open. This was big.

Mom looked worried. “I already have my hands full with my regular customers.”

“I’ve been searching for the right wedding favor” and I just know this is it. The flavor, the name, the color, even your adorable label! Your jars will be absolutely splendid on the place settings... It’s just too perfect.”

I looked at Mom. I was excited for her. What a huge order! And for a famous model!!

Then we heard a soft, shaky voice. “Any jam left for me?”

I turned around. It was Mrs. Binelli, our neighbor. She was at the market with her daughter Kayla. Mrs. Binelli is eighty-four years old. She has a bad knee and has been using a cane for the last few months. Kayla had come from Brooklyn, New York to help her.



I took a jar of jam from our shelf and handed it to her.

“How’s the knee, Mrs. Binelli?” my mother asked.

“The same,” she sighed.

“But there’s hope,” her daughter chimed in. Kayla told us that Mrs. Binelli was having an operation that would fix her knee. It was in a large hospital in the city. Afterwards, she’d be recovering at Kayla’s home. During this time, they needed someone to take care of Mrs. Binelli’s parakeet, Aria.

“Aria doesn’t like to travel,” said Mrs. Binelli. “I tried to bring her to my cousin’s in Cleveland, but she made such a fuss in her cage, flapping around. It was so frightful, we had to turn around.”

I gasped. “Aria never does that when I visit!”

Aria and I are good buddies. When Dad cuts Mrs. Binelli’s lawn, I go inside and visit. I sing, and Aria sings along. Mrs. Binelli says she’s never seen Aria do that with anyone else.



I looked at Mom. She gave me a nod. I knew I could rely on my yes-Mom. We're both the same. We like to make people happy. "I'd love to watch her!" I exclaimed.

"Thank goodness," Kayla sighed. "We were so worried."

"I can pay five dollars per day...," Mrs. Binelli added, opening her purse.

"Goodness—no!" Mom exclaimed, putting her hand on Mrs. Binelli's. "Tabby won't accept money."

Mrs. Binelli wiped tears from her eyes. "Thank you so much, Tabby. I don't know what worried me more—my operation or leaving Aria!" She rested her cane against the stand and gave me a hug. She felt small and delicate, just like a bird.

When they left, I took a break for lunch. I sat down on a bench under a tree, eating Naoki's "Dog of the day." It was lentil and sweet potato, and I'd added my usual three squirts of ketchup. After a few moments, Mom came over and plopped down beside me.



“I have to make two hundred and fifty jars of jam,” she said. “Oh my.”

“I have to take care of one fish, one rabbit *and* one parakeet. Oh my.”

“Maybe you should open up your own booth—*Tabby’s Pet-Sitting Service.*”



Chapter Six

AND *POOF!* THERE WERE FOUR

Fairbanks arrived the next morning with all his bunny gear. Prisha handed me a bag of hay. It was half full.

“You’ll have to get more,” she said.

“Make sure you get it from the pet store. And no wood shavings or clay litter,” Prisha’s mother explained. I nodded. I’d already done my homework on what’s safe to use in a rabbit’s litter.

She handed me money for supplies.

“Bye, Prisha!” I waved and watched their car pull away.

I was sad to see my friend go, but happy to have my new furry pet. We played together all morning. I decorated his cage with little colored flags. When I introduced him to Clementine, he tapped his paw against the side of her bowl, like he



was saying hello.

That afternoon, Dad took Edwina and me to the mall. I wanted to make sure I had everything I needed to take care of my summer pet friends. While Edwina went into a fancy soap store, Dad and I went into the pet store.

I love pets, so, of course, I love pet stores. I love to look at all the animals. Today, there was a turtle in an aquarium. I'd never seen him before. I leaned over.

“Hello, fwiend,” I said. The turtle slowly turned his head. We looked at each other for a while. I tilted my head to the right. He tilted his to the left. I blinked once. He blinked twice. I felt we were having a conversation, though I can't really say what it was about.

Then I headed to the fish section. There were bowls in all different sizes. There were plants—real and plastic—and plenty of decorations. Beside the pirate chest and castle, I spotted a sunken car. It was red with broken windows and could make bubbles.

I decided to buy it for Clementine. I also got



her a plant. The clerk suggested a real one, so she could take little nibbles from it.

I wasn't sure what I'd need for Aria. "Do you have any toys for birds?" I asked the clerk.

"Follow me."

On our way to the bird section, something caught my eye. "Dad—look!"

High up on a display shelf, there was a rabbit hutch*. "*A house for Fairbanks!*"

I tugged at my dad's sleeve. "Can we get it, Daddy? It would be so fun to watch Fairbanks run around in this."

Dad checked the price tag and whistled.

"No," Dad said. "Fairbanks already has a hutch. You made it look very homey."

Dad gave me a smile and took my hand. "Let's just stick with getting him some more hay. Rabbits like hay."

After picking up the hay for Fairbanks and a hanging bell for Aria, we went to the counter to pay. In front of us in line, I saw Elliot. He was buying two bones, a rope toy, and a stuffed fox that





makes a squeaky sound when you squeeze it.

Elliot's dad was with him. He owns the Ocean Crest Lodge. He and my dad send each other customers.

Elliot and I looked at each other awkwardly.

"Maybe you two should play together," my dad said. "Tabby has been complaining that all her friends are going away this summer."

"Dad!" I gasped. *Don't parents understand that they cannot make friends for you? Especially with a boy! Nothing personal against Elliot. It's just, boys are boys!*

"Elliot's friends have also left town," Elliot's father said. "I'm sure he'd love a friend to hang out with, someone other than his new pup."

Elliot turned red. We both looked away, waiting for the torture to end.

Then I heard a voice calling my name. "Tabby!"

"Lin!" I shouted. "I'm going to say hi," I told my dad, and then ran off as fast as my legs would carry me.



“What are you doing here?” I asked. “Aren’t you supposed to be in Australia?”

“Tomorrow,” she said. “Today, we’re looking for a cat food dispenser.”

“What do you need that for?” I asked.

“My uncle *was* going to watch Poof, but he can’t be there on weekends. We need to find a way to feed Poof when he can’t be there.”

The clerk showed us how the automatic food dispenser worked. It was pretty nifty.

Lin frowned. “I’m still worried about Poof. What if she’s lonely? Or the dispenser doesn’t work for some reason and she starves!!”

“She won’t starve,” Lin’s mom said. “She’ll go out her cat door and eat grass. If she’s lucky, she’ll eat a mouse!”

Lin folded her arms. She wasn’t satisfied with this answer. “What if the cat door gets stuck?”

Lin’s mother crouched down beside her. “Oh, honey, that’s not going to happen.”

“What if it does?” Lin had tears in her eyes.

“I can check in on her,” I found myself saying.



“I’ll pet her and make sure she’s got food and water. I’ll make sure the cat door is not stuck. I’ll pretend she’s mine, again!” (I didn’t tell Lin that *every time* I see Poof, that’s what I pretend.)

“You took her in when Edwina turned out to be allergic,” I continued. “Now it’s our turn to help. And I love Poof, you know that.”

“I do know that. Thank you, Tabby. But be sure to ask your parents first. And tell them to call me,” Lin’s mother added.

I looked across the store. Dad was still talking to Elliot’s father. Had he been closer, he might have said no. But I knew Mom would be all right with it. She loves Poof as much as I do.

On the way home in the car, I thought about how busy I was going to be with my new summer pet friends. I counted them out on my fingers. A fish, a rabbit, a bird and now, a cat? That’s four!

Suddenly, I had a wave of panic. *Could I handle it?*



Chapter Seven

SUMMER PET SCHEDULE

I needed to be focused.

I needed to be serious.

But mostly, I needed a schedule. Taking care of four (!) pets is a big deal. A schedule would help me stay on top of it. That's what I use at school to make sure I get all my homework done and remember when my tests are, and what nights I have volleyball, and all the school holidays too.

I wanted my schedule to be big enough so that I could see it from my bed. The cardboard I'd used for my Cycle of Water poster was the perfect size. I just flipped it over and used the back! Next, I reached for my school pencil case. Markers, glue sticks, stickers, ruler—I needed everything!

When I was finished, I taped it to my wall.

“What do you think, Fairbanks?”



Fairbanks was nibbling hay from his litter box. I'd piled the hay up high. I wanted it to look like a meadow*. He popped his head up as if to say, "*Think of what, Tabs?*"

"It's my Summer Pet Schedule!" I told him.

Fairbanks looked up for a second, then went back to his nibbling. I would have liked a bigger reaction. I looked over at my goldfish.

"What about you, Clem?" She was in her sunken car. "Prefer chasing bubbles?" She flicked her tail.

"That's fair." I had to accept that my pet friends weren't big readers. They liked action!

I took Fairbanks out of his cage. He likes to look at Clementine swim. Sometimes they have staring contests. Clementine always wins. It's not really fair, though, since fish don't have eyelids and therefore cannot blink.

At noon, I went over to Mrs. Binelli's. Mom lets me go on my own, as long as I bring my walkie-talkie.

"Hello, Aria!" I said. I opened the cage and



let her fly around. I was sure Mrs. Binelli would be alright with this. I'd seen her do it plenty of times. Sure, it wasn't in the instructions she'd left for me, but I know it's important to let your pet bird exercise. Aria played on her bird swing for a while, then flew up on the chandelier. It's one of her favorite spots to perch. I started singing and she chirped along. I flipped open the walkie-talkie.

“Hear that, Mom? It's ‘Vacation Nation’ as interpreted by a parakeet.”

“Hear what, dear?” I could hear the clatter of jars in the background. Since taking that big wedding order, Mom had been working double-time*. She said she was dreaming in blueberries.

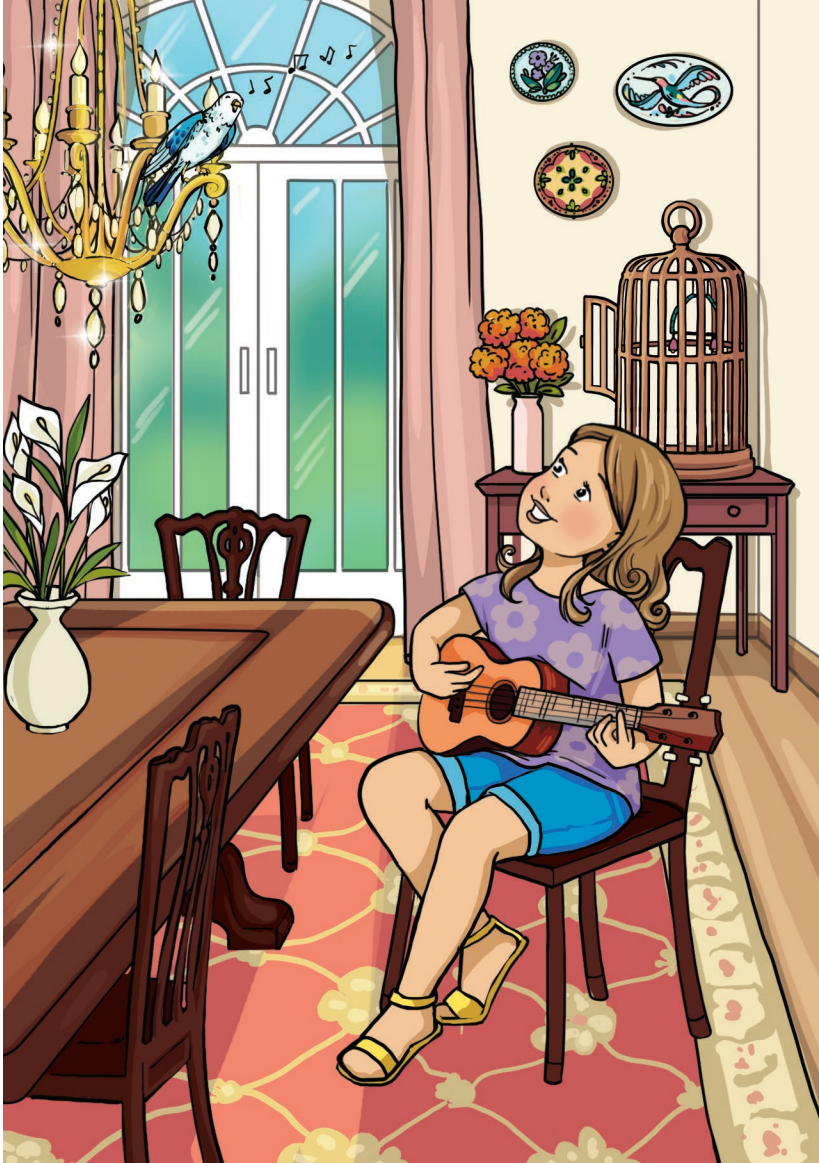
“Never mind,” I said.

Aria and I sang a few duets together, then I noticed the clock. It was getting late. “Time to go back in your cage,” I told Aria, making a clicking sound with my tongue.

She didn't move.

“Aria! You stubborn little thing!” I called her again. Then I held out my finger. But she backed





away.

Suddenly I panicked. I couldn't just go home and leave her out of her cage. She could get into all kinds of trouble. I wondered if I needed to ask Mom for help. As I reached for my walkie-talkie, I remembered the trick Mrs. Binelli had given me.

I went around the living room and closed all the drapes and blinds. Then I turned off the lights. When I put them back on, Aria was back in her cage! The darkness made her think it was bedtime. Birds usually return to their roosts* at night to sleep.

It was like a magic trick! I looked around. I wished there had been someone to see it. A magic trick needs an audience. But I was alone.

My next summer "pet date" was with Poof.

"Food? Check. Water? Check. Cat door operational? Check."

Poof jumped on my lap and I petted her. She purred like an engine!

When I left Lin's house, Poof snuck out her cat door and followed me.



“No!” I told her. But she bounded right up to me. *Meow!*

“*Poof!* Not again!” The last time this happened, she followed me all the way to my house! I had to carry her back, three whole blocks. There was only one solution. I went back inside Lin’s house, opened a can of tuna and put the tuna juice in a bowl. While Poof lapped it up, I ran as fast as I could into the yard and jumped behind a tree. From my hiding spot, I watched the cat door. After a few moments, Poof finally popped out. She looked up and down the sidewalk, wondering where I’d gone. I held my breath, waiting for her to give up the search and forget about me.

In the tree above, a squirrel looked down at me. It chirped.

I put my finger to my lips. “Sshhhhh, don’t give me away.”

But it was too late. Poof bounded behind the tree.

Yeah, you got me. Then I realized something: we were playing Hide and Seek and it was fun! I



play Hide and Seek with my friends all the time. Now I was playing with Poof!

“Okay, Poof, it’s your turn to hide.” I covered my eyes and starting counting. “One, two, three, four...” When I reached twenty, I opened my eyes. *Meow!* I looked down. Poof was standing at my feet, staring up at me.

“No, Poof. You have to hide.”

She purred and rubbed against my leg.

“Come on. Hide!”

A butterfly flew past and Poof chased it into the neighbor’s garden. I shrugged and made my way home. I guess you can’t really play Hide and Seek with a pet.



In the evenings, when I don’t have something planned, like Summer Movie Night in the park with my family, or a tennis lesson, I play in my room with Fairbanks and Clementine. That’s when I do my pet research.



Today, I learned that rabbits need space. One book says they need a twelve square foot* cage—at least!

“Oh my!” I grabbed my ruler and measured Fairbanks’ cage. I wasn’t sure how to do the math, so Dad helped me. It was only six and a half square feet!

“See? He needs more space! We need that rabbit hutch!”

“No,” Dad said, and left the room.

I looked at Fairbanks. I was worried. *Was his house too small?* I looked around my room and spotted my dollhouse.

“What do you think?” I asked Fairbanks. “Would you like a new home?”

Fairbanks twitched his whiskers and hopped into my hands. I carried him over to the dollhouse and placed him down by the front door. He sniffed around the walls. To encourage him to go inside, I placed a few pieces of lettuce by the small sofa. He walked right in! After he ate, he looked around the miniature living room. Then he spotted Nina Lyn.



Nina Lyn is my favorite doll. The pink dollhouse is her home. She was sitting at the kitchen table with the cup of pretend coffee I'd given her this morning. She was still in her bathrobe. Fairbanks hopped over and sniffed at her slippers.

“Nina Lyn, this is Fairbanks,” I told her. “He’s going to be your furry new roommate.”

“Wonderful! I love animals!” she squeaked. I made my voice really high. It’s my Nina Lyn voice. I wished Prisha were around to do her Fairbanks voice. Or even Edwina. She gives the Christmas doll the sweetest southern accent. It was hard playing *The Fabulous Lives of Dolls (and Pets)* all by myself.

Suddenly, I felt lonely. My heart longed for my friends. My *human* friends.

That’s when I heard it. A yapping sound in the yard. It got louder and louder. I put Fairbanks back in his cage and ran to my window. In the backyard, there was a dog. A puppy, actually. It ran around in circles for a minute, and then



stopped to dig.

“You have *another* animal to babysit?” Mom asked as I charged through the kitchen.

“It’s not one of mine!” I hollered, pushing open the back door and dashing into the yard. The pup was happily chewing on Dad’s sprinkler nozzle.

“No!” My father shouted, running towards him. “Let go of that!”

“You better listen to him,” I said, softly. “He means business.” The pup looked at me, then dropped the nozzle.

I leaned down and held out my hand. The pup sniffed it and wagged his tail. “Hello *fwiend*,” I said, petting him. “Where did you come from?”

“He’s mine,” a boy’s voice answered. I looked up to see Elliot peeking over the fence. He was out of breath from running. “Sorry. He just got ahead of me.”

“That’s all right, Elliot,” my dad said, smiling and waving him through the gate and into the yard. “Let’s make sure to keep the pup outside.”



I looked at my father. I was confused. *What was Elliot doing here?*

“Elliot’s parents have a meeting tonight at the town hall,” he explained. They were going to hire a sitter but I suggested Elliot come over here for a few hours. Be nice for you to have a friend. Right Tabs?”

I didn’t answer. I was still in shock.



Chapter Eight

A HUMAN FRIEND

My face was red and my heart was pounding.

I wasn't happy about my forced playdate, but Elliot and his pup were just too funny for me to stay grumpy for long.

"Let go!" Elliot said. The pup was tugging at his pant leg. The more Elliot shook his leg, the more the pup tugged. Elliot looked at me. "He's just doing this to embarrass me."

"Maybe we should offer him a library book?" I said with a grin. Elliot laughed, the pup tugged harder. "Rascal! OFF!"

"Rascal?" I said, moving closer. "That's a cute name for a pup."

"He was supposed to be called Lucie," Elliot explained, "but then we found out it was a boy, not a girl. After that, the name Rascal just took





over, because, well, he's a rascal."

"He just wants to play," I said. Rascal stopped tugging and wagged his tail.

Elliot pulled out a braided rope from his backpack and we used it to play tug-of-war. It was fun. Then I tossed the rope.

"Fetch! Come on, boy!"

Rascal bounded after it. When he got the toy, he ran around the yard with it. We chased after him. "Come Rascal, it's called fetch, not tag!" Elliot shouted.

Something told me Rascal knew what Elliot wanted him to do. He just preferred being chased. Eventually Rascal got tired of running around and lay down in the grass. When he fell asleep, I turned to Elliot.

"Want to see my summer pet friends?"

Before going inside, I used my roller brush to take off the fur. "My sister is allergic," I explained, passing him the brush. "That's why Rascal can't come inside." Elliot didn't seem to mind.

In my room, I removed the yellow scarf from



Clementine's bowl.

"It's so she doesn't jump out when I'm not around. She loves jumping. Check it out." I showed him how to feed her to make her jump. "Now you try."

Elliot held up a flake. Nothing happened.

"Wait for it," I said.

After a moment, the fish jumped, making a little splash as she snatched the flake. Elliot looked at me, and grinned. "Cool!"

"And this is Fairbanks," I said, opening up the cage. Elliot scooped him up. He seemed at ease* with pets.

"That's Fairbanks' summer cottage," I said, walking over to my dollhouse. "I'm turning it into a rabbit house."

I took Fairbanks and placed him in the dollhouse. He jumped on the kitchen table, knocking over Nina Lyn.

I picked her up. "Hey, this is my house, too!" I said, in my Nina Lyn voice. "Sheesh! I'm going upstairs!" I put Nina Lyn in her bedroom.



“Finally! Some privacy!”

I looked at Elliot. He was frowning and scratching his chin. I wondered if this was too much doll stuff for him. *Would he want to leave?* Finally, he spoke.

“Can Fairbanks go upstairs, too?” he asked.

“Yes, but I have to put him there. He can’t go up on his own.”

“You can make stairs,” Elliot said. “Then he can hop up and down as he wants.”

“That’s a good idea!” I watched as Elliot crouched down and inspected the dollhouse.

“I have some building blocks at home that might work. They’re big and they stick together. I have other stuff, too. My race car track has a parking ramp. It might be wide enough...”

“Let’s try!” I said, excitedly. “Are you free tomorrow?”

“It’s summer,” said Elliot. “I’m free every day!”

“Do you like Hide and Seek?” I asked.

“Who doesn’t?” he replied.



I grinned. I had a new summer friend. A human one. Even if he was a boy.

Elliot's parents came to pick him up later that evening. When they drove away, Dad winked at me.

“Sometimes dads have good ideas, hey kid?” He held up his hand for a high-five. I hid my smile as I walked right past him towards the house. I didn't want him to know he was right, even if he was.



Chapter Nine

PET-O-GRAMS

“Mom? Have we got any more celery?” I said, marching into the kitchen. “Fairbanks wants a bedtime snack.”

A batch of jam jars was cooling on the kitchen table. Mom was wearing her blueberry-print apron; it was covered in blueberry splatters.

“Speaking of bedtimes, shouldn’t you be in your pajamas?”

Before I could answer, Mom’s phone beeped.

Mom groaned. “It’s been doing that for the last hour. If only I knew where it was!” The phone beeped again.

I looked on the kitchen table and saw a jam jar shake. I walked over and found Mom’s pink cellphone case hiding behind it.



My *kids messaging app* box was exploding with messages.



From Lin:

Hi Tabs! Checking in on Poof. Cat door working?
Food bowl full?



From Prisha:

How is my precious fluffball? Not stuck
under a sofa again, I hope.



From Maria Pleasant:

Tabby, I just wanted to thank you again for
taking Clementine for the summer. Please
remember that Clementine's bowl must be cleaned
once a week and don't forget to rinse the
pebbles! I know I left you instructions but just
like in the classroom, I find a reminder never
hurts. ☺



From: Lin:

Kitty news please????!



From Prisha:

I can't stop thinking about Fairbanks stuck
under a sofa!!



From Maria Pleasant:

P.S.: Do not overfeed the fish.





From Carmella Binelli:

Hello Tabby, is this you? My daughter set this account up for me so I can contact you. You're never too old to learn something new! Please let me know if you receive this letter and also, how my darling Aria is doing.



From Lin:

Meow.



From Prisha:

911, Bunny Rabbit, what is your emergency?

“Oh, no! I have to reply to all these messages! Everyone wants updates on their pets. They're worried.”

Mom showed me how to create a group message to Tabby's Pet-Sitting Service.

This is what I sent:

To: Tabby's Pet-Sitting service



From: Tabby



A second later, Mom's phone beeped.



From Carmella Binelli:

You just sent me a picture. I can't make out what it is without my glasses. I hope Aria is all right!

I sighed. My friends needed more. How could I help?

Suddenly, I had an idea.



"Say 'cheese,'" Elliot said, pointing his camera at me.

"Cheese!" I hollered, lifting Poof off the ground.

The night before, I'd told Elliot about my idea. He was excited. He brought his camera. We snapped some pictures of Clementine in her sunken car. Then we recorded Aria playing with her bird bell. Now we were at Lin's house taking pictures of Poof.

"Let's make a video of Poof chasing the laser pen," I said. "Lin will love that."

Elliot held the laser pen. Poof went wild trying to catch the red dot. She jumped so high she practically



touched the ceiling!

Later, at my house, we made stairs for the dollhouse using Elliot's car ramp. We placed it beside the house and put Fairbanks at the bottom. Well, wouldn't you know, Fairbanks hopped right on up! Then he used the window to go inside. He sniffed around the second-floor bathroom and even jumped into the tub.

Nina Lyn wasn't sure if she liked sharing a bathroom with a rabbit.

"Ugh! It smells like rabbit!" she said in disgust. She left the house, jumped on her scooter and headed to her Beach House under the window. Fairbanks hopped after her.

"I want to come, too!" said Elliot, doing the best Fairbanks voice ever.

When Elliot went home at the end of the day, I uploaded the photos and videos we'd taken. Then I wrote messages to go with them. Mom helped me proofread them for mistakes. We called the texts "Your Day by Day Pet-o-Gram."

After only a few minutes, I got replies.



Mrs. Binelli wrote:

I had my knee surgery this morning and wasn't feeling very well. Hearing Aria singing made me feel much better.

When I sent Prisha a photo of Fairbanks' new house, she texted:

His very own rabbit mansion!! Now Fairbanks is never going to want to come home. 😊

A minute later she added:

Is that Elliot C. in the background?????????

I giggled. Suddenly, being in Ocean Crest felt like the most exciting place to be. Way more exciting than Australia or Alaska or anywhere.





Chapter Ten

WORST PET-SITTER EVER

Elliot came over every day that summer.

One day, he brought a remote car.

I'd never played with one before. I crashed it a few times before I figured out how to use the remote control. When I did, there was no stopping me! Elliot says I'm a pro.

We tried to put Fairbanks on the car. I don't think he liked it very much because he kept hopping off. Then I had another idea.

"Let's take Nina Lyn for a ride!" I shouted.

I put my doll on the car and it went *zoooooom!* She fell off a few times, so we attached her with elastic hair bands. It worked! Nina Lyn wasn't happy.

"My hair! It's all messed up from the wind!" I pouted, using my Nina Lyn voice.

"That's why you need your helmet!" said Elliot.



We couldn't find her pink helmet so Elliot plucked a spaghetti strainer from my toy kitchen and plopped it on Nina Lyn's head.

"It's very stylish," Elliot said, using his Fairbanks voice.

I laughed so hard I fell on the ground, holding my tummy. Meanwhile, Elliot guided Nina Lyn and the car out into the hallway.

Suddenly, there came a loud crash. I sat up. "Did Nina Lyn hit the wall?"

"I think it came from downstairs," said Elliot, coming back into my room.

Then I heard my mother shouting. "Rascal! Out! Out!"

We raced downstairs and into the kitchen. We stopped and gasped at what we saw. Mom's cooling jam jars had been knocked over onto the floor. There was jam everywhere. Under the table, looking guilty, was a bluish-purple Rascal.

"How did he get in here?" I cried. Mom shook her head. She had tears in her eyes.

Elliot pointed at the back door. It was propped



open by a crate.

“Oh, shoot!” Mom gasped. “I put that there when I was bringing in the boxes of jars from the shed. I meant to remove it, then forgot.”

I felt awful for Mom. I knew how much she had to do for the wedding.

We helped her pick up the worst of the mess. Then Elliot realized Rascal was no longer under the table.

We saw purple paw prints on the floor. We followed them up the stairs and into my room. But Rascal wasn't there.

“He probably went back out in the yard,” Elliot said, and ran back downstairs. I was about to follow him when I heard a soft squeak coming from Fairbanks' cage. I looked over. “Oh, no!”

The poor bunny was huddled in a corner of his cage. His snowball-white fur was splattered with blueberry jam. Rascal must have shaken himself right beside his cage.

I opened his cage door and picked him up. He was trembling and his fur was damp and sticky and



purple. “Hey, little guy. Don’t be scared. It’s all right.”

Just then my clock alarm went off. It was time for the daily Pet-o-Grams. *But how could I send a picture of Fairbanks looking like that? Prisha would think I was the worst pet-sitter ever! And poor Fairbanks. He couldn’t stay purple and sticky forever!*

“What’s wrong?” Edwina asked. She had just got back from drama camp. She must have heard me crying on the other side of the bathroom.

I showed her Fairbanks.

Edwina put her arm around me. “I can help.”



I held Fairbanks gently while Edwina got to work.

Wash bucket. Shower nozzle. Washcloth. Step by step, Edwina made us our very own pet-grooming station. She put the small bucket in the bathtub and tested the length of the shower cord to see if it reached.

“Wait!” I said, stopping her.

I’d remembered something I’d read in *1001*



Fun Facts about Pets. Rabbits don't like baths. It can scare them. And they don't like being wet and cold. After looking up ways to groom a rabbit, Edwina said she'd use a damp cloth and a brush instead. Still, I was worried.

"Don't hurt him!" I said, biting my nails.

"I'll be careful. Don't worry, sis! You may be the one who's good with pets, but when it comes to taking baths, I'm the pro!" She held out her hands.

I took a breath and handed her my purple rabbit. Fairbanks made a squeaking sound. He wasn't convinced.

"I love baths. And I know you will too, little guy," she told Fairbanks. "Now let's get rid of all that blueberry."

Edwina gently held Fairbanks and rubbed him with the cloth. She used a brush and gently combed off the stuck-on bits of blueberry.

At first, Fairbanks squirmed. Edwina started to sing softly.

"Vacation, vacation

Let's dance across the nation..."





I sang along too. Fairbanks must have liked it, because he calmed right down. After a few minutes, the blueberry stains were wiped clean and he was white as a snowball! I took a picture for my Pet-o-Gram.

That's when I noticed it: Edwina's nose was a little runny from being so close to Fairbanks. But she didn't mind. While she put Fairbanks back in his hutch, I thought of Rascal. He had been covered in blueberries too. *Did Elliot find him? What was taking him so long?*

Just as I finished sending my Pet-o-Grams, Elliot tumbled back into my room. He was out of breath.

“I can't find Rascal anywhere.”

From my window, Elliot showed me the big hole in our yard, under the fence.

“He must have dug his way out.” Elliot was worried. I was too.

Our pet drama wasn't over yet.



Chapter Eleven

YEP, THAT'S RASCAL

We checked Elliot's house, the dog park, and every backyard on the block. No Rascal.

"You think he was trying to find a way home, and got lost?" Elliot asked. He was beginning to panic.

Then I remembered the day we took Rascal to the dog-friendly beach. He'd splashed around in the water, chasing the waves like it was a game. He especially liked the hot dog vendor who gave him a sausage.

This gave me an idea.

"Pups go where they are happy," I said. "*And* where there's sausage!"

"What does that mean?" Elliot asked.



Mom drove us to the beach. When we got there, it was still pretty crowded. Some families were packing up their towels and coolers, ready to leave. Others were arriving to watch the sunset.

I saw Naoki's vegan sausage truck. This time, it was parked on Beach Boulevard. I ran over.

"Naoki, did you see this dog?" Elliot showed him a picture from his camera.

Naoki looked at the screen. "I did! He stole a sausage right out of a customer's hands. He likes vegan."

"Yep, that's Rascal!" Elliot said. "Which way did he go?"

Naoki pointed towards the pier.

As we ran towards it, we passed a dad and two boys who were playing ball with their Siberian husky.

"We did see a puppy like that," one of the boys said. "He played with us for a while, then ran off...with our ball."

"Yep, that's Rascal!" cried Elliot. We waited for a moment to let my mom catch up. The sun



was low in the sky, with streaks of pink.

When we finally got to the pier, we saw a fisherman casting a line*.

“Have you seen an Australian shepherd puppy?” my mother asked. “He’s white and tan with blue eyes.”

“Sure did,” the man said. “He stole a fish right out of my bucket!”

“Yep, that’s Rascal!” said Elliot.

“Which way did he go?”

The fisherman pointed towards Surfers’ Beach. The water is deep there. That’s where Dad gives surfing classes.

We ran over as fast as we could. A group of surfers were getting ready for an evening ride. We asked them if they’d seen Rascal. They shook their heads. Elliot sat down on the ground, defeated. We didn’t know what else to do.

Suddenly I heard a seagull squawking.

I looked towards the ocean. A seagull was flapping its’ wings, hovering above the waves. It was my feathered friend from the market! It was



trying to tell me something. But what?

I looked down and spotted a white and tan shape moving in the ocean. I gasped.

“Look! It’s Rascal!”

“Rascal! Come here, boy!” Elliot shouted.

Rascal swam towards us. But there was a problem. The waves were pushing him back faster than he could paddle. His head bobbed up and down in the crashing waves as he drifted further away from us.

We had to rescue him! But how?

I looked down the beach at the lifeguard chair. It was empty. Just as I feared we’d lose him forever, a surfboard floated up beside him and a pair of hands reached out...

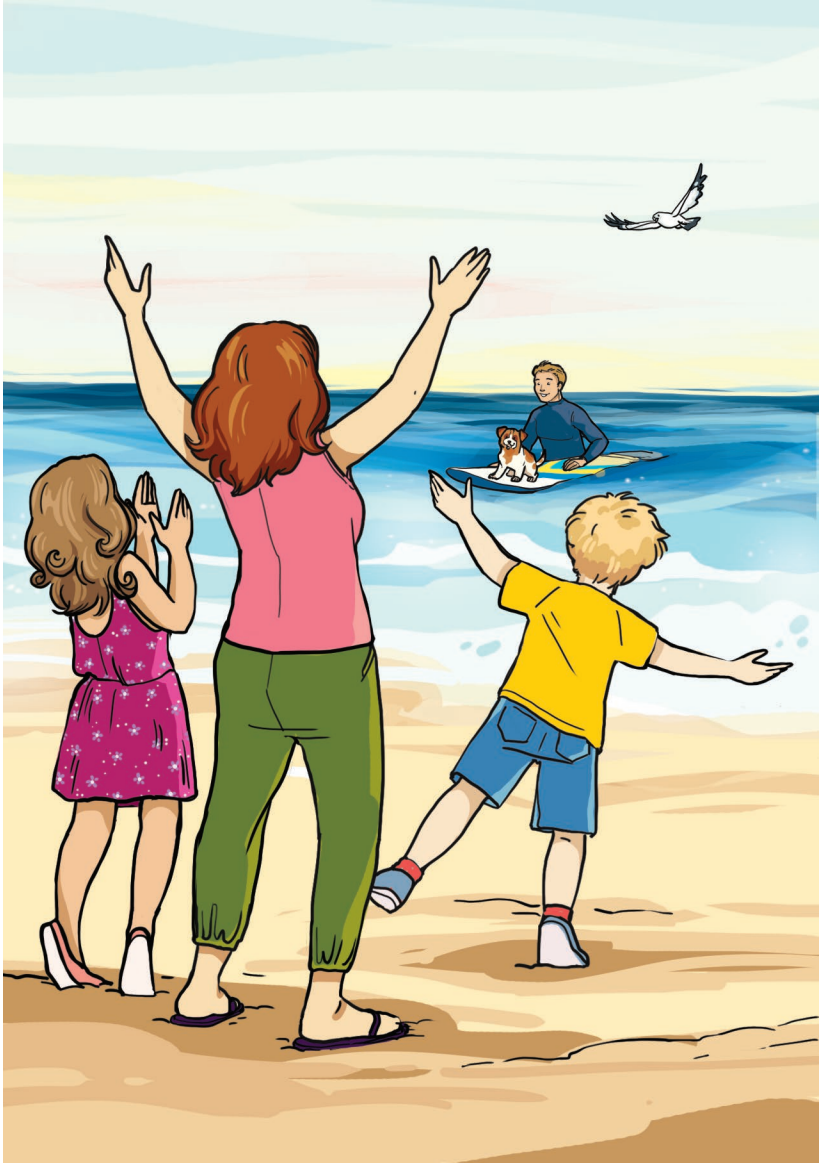
Rascal clawed and scuffled onto the surfboard.

Who was this mystery surfer coming to Rascal’s rescue?

It was Dad!

With Rascal perched at the front of the board, Dad paddled all the way back to the beach.





Rascal looked wet and worn out, but wagged his tail when he saw Elliot.

I ran into the shallows* and hugged Dad tightly. We were so lucky that Dad had been giving a surf lesson when he saw Rascal stranded in the waves.

“You’re a hero, Dad!”

As if he agreed, Rascal bounded over and licked Dad’s face. Mom wrapped Dad in a towel and tossed him his flip-flops. Rascal snatched one mid-air and ran off. Dad chased after him.

“Come back here with that!” Rascal didn’t stop.

I shook my head. “Yep, that’s Rascal.”



Chapter Twelve

GOODBYE, HELLO

One morning, I looked at my wall calendar. It was the last day of summer! It had whizzed by. My pet friends would be returning home soon. But they needed a proper good-bye. A Farewell Party! Just as I was writing up my guest list...

DING DONG!

Prisha was at the door with her parents. “We got back a day early,” she said. “I wanted to see you, and Fairbanks, as soon as possible!”

And then Mrs. Binelli, Mrs. Binelli’s daughter, Lin, and Lin’s mom dropped by. They wanted to thank me for babysitting their pets. It was a Farewell Party on the spot! Even Mrs. Pleasant showed up. She was setting up her classroom for the start of classes on Monday.

“Clementine’s tank is filled with fresh water,”



she said. “All that’s missing is Clementine!”

Mom sat us in the living room and served iced tea. She was wearing a pretty dress. It was the first time I’d seen her out of her blueberry-stained apron in weeks. That’s because she’d finished her wedding jam jars—all two hundred and fifty of them.

Mrs. Binelli showed us her scar from knee surgery. It looked like a snake! Before she left, she gave me an envelope. Inside, there was a gift card for the toy store at the mall. Then Lin handed me a giant chocolate bar and a handmade “thank you” card with a drawing of Poof on it.

Prisha was the last to leave. She gave me a friendship bracelet made of pink and green beads. “You’re the best, Tabby,” she said, giving me a hug. I felt proud of myself. I’d helped my friends.

Then we went up to my room to get Fairbanks.

“Good-bye, fwiend,” I said, giving him a kiss on his nose, and then handing him over to Prisha. It felt weird, watching them go.



When I went back into my room, I saw Nina Lyn. She was lying on her doll bed.

“I’m going to miss Fairbanks,” she sobbed.

“Me, too,” I said, crouching down beside the dollhouse.

“Me, three,” said Edwina, flopping down on my beanbag chair. Since the Famous Blueberry Incident, Edwina and Fairbanks had become buddies.

“We can always go to Prisha’s house and visit him,” I told Nina Lyn.

“It’s not just Fairbanks,” Nina Lyn said. “All our summer pets are gone.” It was supposed to be my Nina Lyn voice, but it sounded more like mine.

I looked at the empty fishbowl on the dresser. The sunken car was making bubbles for no one.

Edwina grabbed a crayon and scribbled a note on a piece of paper. Then she taped it to the window of the dollhouse.

“For Rent: Pets welcome.”



I couldn't help but smile. *The Fabulous Lives of Dolls (and Pets)* was back! Then I saw the envelope with my name on it. It was Mrs. Binelli's gift card.

"I know how to fix the problem," I said, taking out the card. "Toys!"



Dad drove us to the mall that afternoon. As soon as I saw it, I knew it was the perfect thing to lift Nina Lyn out of the dumps. A stuffed black-and-white cat with emerald green eyes and gold flecks. It came with a little bowl that said "Kitty."

"Think Nina Lyn will like this?" I showed the cat to Edwina. "She won't be sad if she has her very own pet to love."

"Meow meow meow," said Edwina. "That means 'will you be my friend?' in Kitten Talk."

After the toy store, we stopped at the *real* pet store. I wanted to get a bone for Rascal. Though the summer was over, I hoped Elliot and I would



still be friends. And Rascal too. I watched a girl shopping for squeakie toys for her dog, and I wondered: *Would I ever have a pet of my own?* Nina Lyn was getting a cat. *But what about me?*

On our way to the cash register, I saw a familiar face.

“Hello, *fwiend*,” I said. It was the turtle in his aquarium. He’d been there all summer. He looked at me and blinked three times. I knew what just what he wanted. I tugged at Dad’s sleeve.

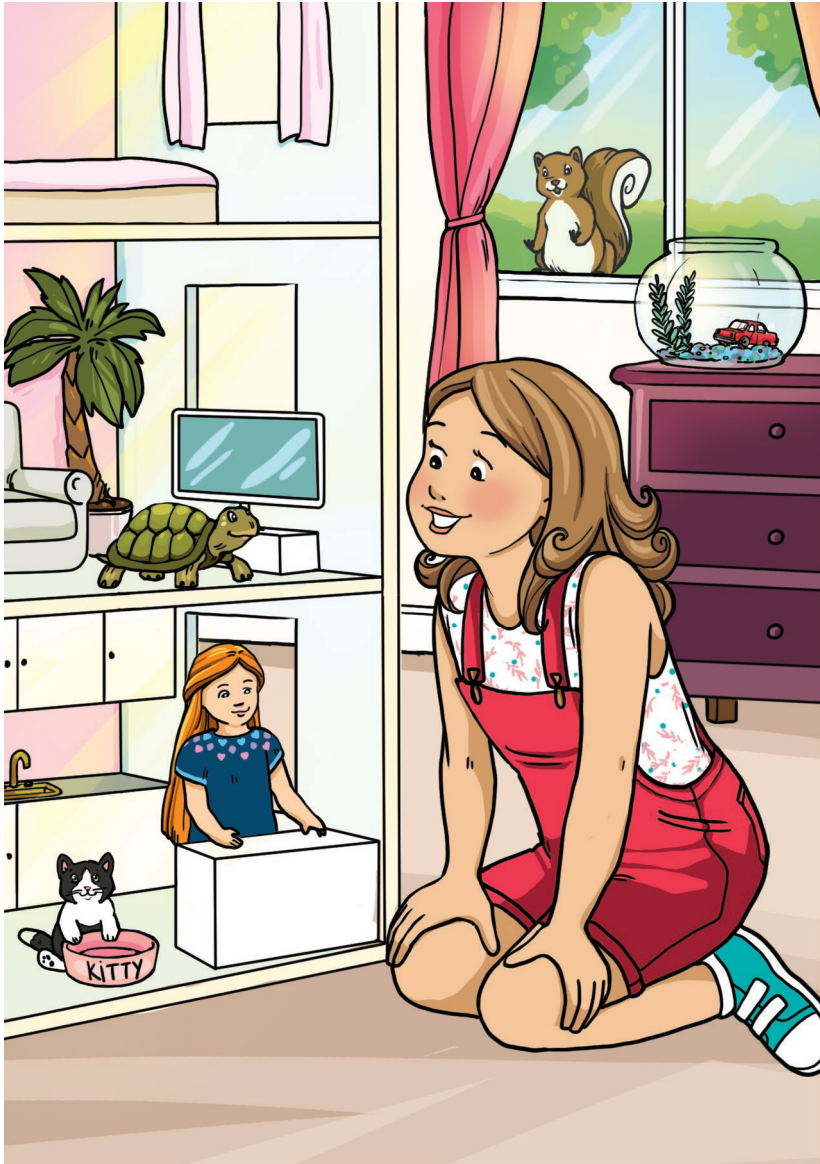
“Dad, can I have a pet turtle? I promise to take care of him. You know I can do it. I had four pets this summer, and a dog! Everybody said I did a really good job. Plus, turtles don’t have fur, so Edwina won’t be allergic. Can I, Dad? Pretty please?”

I gave Dad my best sad doggy-begging face.

Dad took a breath and closed his eyes. He was thinking. Finally, he spoke.

This time, he didn’t say no.





Glossary

*Many words have more than one meaning. Here are the definitions of words marked with this symbol * (an asterisk) as they are used in this story.*

at ease: *a relaxed attitude, free from worry*

bunny binky: *when a rabbit twists and jumps in the air, and has so much happy energy, it can't control itself*

cast a line: *In the sport of fishing, if you cast something, such as a line or a net, you throw it far into the water*

consonants : *any letter of the alphabet that is not a vowel: b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z*

double-time: *extra time spent on a project*

drawing straws: *a lottery, where everyone chooses a straw, and the person with the shortest one loses*

hutch: *a cage, typically with a wire-mesh front, for keeping rabbits*



hypoallergenic: *something that causes fewer allergic reactions*

meadows: *low-lying land that is covered with grass*

natural survival instincts: *the ability to know what to do to stay alive*

paper-mâché: *a paper-mâché object is made by gluing layers of newspaper together into a shape. It's a fun craft*

roost: *a support on which birds rest*

shallows: *the part of the ocean where the water level is low, and where it is not deep*

(things) snowball out of control: *an expression describing a situation which has rapidly gotten out of control, as when a snowball grows larger while rolling down a hill*

(how to find) square feet: *multiply the length measurement by the width measurement (in feet). This yields a product called the area, which is expressed in square feet*



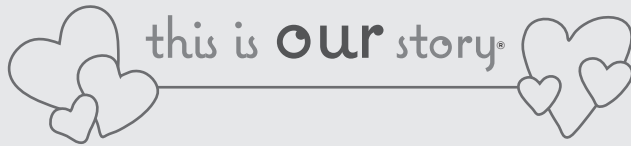
tabby cat: *not a breed of cat, but rather a type of coat with an M-shaped marking on its' forehead; stripes by its' eyes and across its' cheeks; swirly patterns on the body*

vegan: *someone who will not eat products made from animals*

vendor: *a person offering something for sale*

wedding favor: *a small gift to wedding guests, from the bride and groom*





We are an extraordinary generation of children.
And have we got a story to tell.

Our Generation® is unlike any that has come before. We're making a positive impact on our community by performing small, but powerful, acts of kindness, standing tall for causes we believe in, and creating a narrative where everyone can make a difference.

We're speaking up for those around us, taking leaps to develop big ideas, and embracing new opportunities without ever forgetting to build lasting memories along the way. From playing sports outdoors and learning new instruments, to singing out loud and dancing around, we're laughing together with friends as we share in the best moments of being a kid.

Our dreams have no limits, our voices echo around every corner, and we have the strongest belief that we can make anything and everything possible with our greatest gift: imagination.

This is our time. This is our story.

ourgeneration.com



About the Author

Laura Leigh Motte has had two cats, two chickens, and three goldfish, but she never, ever, dreamed of having a dog until her son Benjamin insisted. Now she has “Lucie,” a white lab and true “Rascal.” Lucie doesn’t eat books – thankfully – but she does eat the occasional sock. This is Laura’s seventh OG book.

About the Illustrator

Passionate about drawing from an early age, Géraldine Charette decided to pursue her studies in computer multimedia in order to further develop her style and technique. Her favorite themes to explore in her illustrations are fashion and urban life. In her free time, Géraldine loves to paint and travel. She is passionate about horses and loves spending time at the stable. It’s where she feels most at peace and gives her time to think and fuel her creativity.



Summer Pet Friends became the book that you are holding in your hands with the assistance of the talented people at Maison Battat Inc., including Joe Battat, Dany Battat, Andrew Shapiro, Loredana Ramacieri, Véronique Casavant, Valentina Quan, Pamela Shrimpton, Joanne Burke Casey, Natalie Cohen, Jenny Gambino, Alexandra Bonfâ, Laurie Gaudreau-Levesque, Ananda Guarany, Sandy Jacinto, Cynthia Lopez and Zeynep Yasar.





this is OUR story®

Summer Pet Friends

Tabby™ loves animals. The first time she saw a chipmunk, she pointed and said “fwiend.” She feels that way about all animals. She loves learning about them, too. She must have read *1001 Fun Facts about Pets* 1001 times!

Tabby’s love for animals leads to a summer job taking care of her friends’ pets. Though she’s sad to see her two besties, Prisha and Lin, leave for the entire summer, at least she has their pets to love.

But sometimes, a goldfish, a rabbit, a parakeet and a cat just aren’t enough. Tabby needs a human friend. Finally, someone will appear to fill the empty spot, and it will be the person Tabby least expected.

Tabby’s summer is full of surprises.

It’s impossible to separate Our Generation® characters from the generation of girls who read about and play with them, for they are one and the same.

They’re changing the world by making their households greener. They’re baking cupcakes to help charities. They’re writing in their journals, practicing for recitals, doing cartwheels down the block and giggling with their friends until they can hardly breathe. Our Generation is about girls growing up together. “This is our story” reflects the community of these amazing girls as they laugh, learn and create the narrative of their own generation.

Ages 7 and up

Maison Battat Inc. Publisher

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