

Alfie
all Alone

For Alice, Max and Georgie

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Chapter One



“Evie, did you put these in the trolley?”
Evie’s mum was staring at a packet of rice cakes, looking confused.

“No. Why would I, Mum, they look horrible.” Evie made a face. “It was you, don’t you remember? You said they might be nice to nibble on when you were feeling sick. But I bet they’ll just make you feel even more sick.”

Her mum sighed. “You’re probably right. She smiled apologetically at the assistant who was waiting for them to pay. “Sorry. I seem to be a bit forgetful at the moment.”

The girl smiled back. “That’s OK. My sister’s pregnant and she locked herself out of the house twice last week. How long until the baby’s due?”

“Another nine weeks.” Evie’s mum sighed. “The time just seems to be creeping past at the moment.” She patted her enormous tummy.

“Mum, can I go and look at the noticeboard?” Evie asked. She was getting a bit bored with baby talk. Ever since her mum’s bump had begun to show, complete strangers had started talking to them in the street, asking

about the baby. They always asked Evie how she felt about having a little brother or sister, and she was sick of having to smile and say she was looking forward to it. She was, but the fussing was starting to get on her nerves. And she had a horrible feeling that it would get a lot worse after the baby arrived.

“Of course you can. Actually, Evie, see if anyone’s selling any baby stuff. It would be a good way to find some bargains.”

Evie sighed quietly. Honestly, did Mum ever think about anything else? She wandered over to the big board behind the Customer Service point where they put up the advertisements. You could find some really fun things sometimes. Once she’d spotted an

advert for a pair of nearly new roller blades that someone had grown out of – she'd been able to afford them with her pocket money, and they were great.

She browsed through vacuum cleaners, lawn mowers, a girl offering to babysit – and then caught her breath in delight. The next ad was larger than some of the others, and it had a photo attached – a basket of the cutest little white dogs, all clambering over each other. One of them was grinning out at Evie, a naughty glint in his eye.



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Evie sighed adoringly. That puppy was gorgeous! She had to show him to Mum. She looked back over at the till to see if she was done yet. Her mum was looking round for her, and Evie waved, and then dashed over.

“Come and see! You’ll love it. Anyway, you shouldn’t be pushing that on your own, Mum, Dad would be really cross.” Evie helped her mum with the trolley, giving her a stern glare.

“Dad is a fusspot.” Mum chuckled. “What am I looking at?” She stared at the board, trying to work out what

Evie was so excited about. “We’re not buying a trampoline, Evie,” she said, grinning. “And we definitely don’t want a speedboat!”

“No, look, I just wanted you to see this cute photo.” Evie pointed out the basket of puppies. “Aren’t they sweet?”

“Oh, yes, they’re lovely. What sort of dog are they? Westies...” Mum gazed thoughtfully at the photo. “Westies are quite small dogs, aren’t they?” she mused quietly.

Evie nodded. “I think Mrs Jackson down the road’s got a Westie. You know, Tyson? He’s gorgeous.”

“Mmmm.” Evie’s mum nodded. “OK. I suppose you’re going to insist on pushing this trolley now, aren’t you? Actually, Evie, do you want to go and

look at the animal magazines – I have to go to the loo again.” She sighed theatrically. “Don’t move from the magazines, I’ll only be a minute.”

As soon as Evie set off, her mum scabbled hastily in her handbag for a pen. Then she made a note of the name and phone number from the puppy advert on her till receipt, and hurried after Evie.



As they drove home, Evie gazed out of the window, day-dreaming about puppies. She had no idea that her mum was sneaking glances at her every so often. Over the last few weeks, Evie’s mum and dad had been worrying about

how the new baby was going to affect her. After all, eight was quite old to suddenly have a new baby brother or sister. Evie seemed to be happy about it, but it was difficult to tell. They'd been wondering what they could do to stop her feeling left out, and it was only the day before that Evie's dad had thought of getting her a puppy. Her mum hadn't been too sure.

"Won't it be a lot of hassle, just before the baby comes?" she'd worried.

"We've got a few weeks. And the point is that Evie would be doing all the looking after – it'll give her something to fuss over when we're fussing over the baby." Evie's dad was really enthusiastic. He liked dogs, and he knew Evie would love a puppy.

After all, a puppy had been at the top of her Christmas list for the last three years. Her parents had always said she wasn't quite old enough – mostly because Evie's mum thought having a dog would be a lot of work. But Evie's dad had been trying hard to convince her, so the Westie ad had turned up at the perfect time.

"What are you thinking about, Evie?" Mum asked her, smiling. "You're miles away."

Evie grinned. "Just that lovely dog. I know we can't have a puppy, but if we did, I'd like one just like him..."

