

The Puppy  
who was Left  
Behind

See page 128 for a glossary of boat words.

For Maddison

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# Chapter One



“I’m ready to go!” Anna raced into the kitchen, dragging her wheeie suitcase, with a rucksack on her back. Her Irish Setter puppy, Fred, galloped behind her. He was very confused by the suitcase, but he liked the way it rattled.

“Are you really all packed?” Mum asked, looking at Anna’s bags. “That was quick. What are you taking?”

Anna peered behind her at the suitcase and laughed at Fred. He was trying to get his nose underneath to nibble at the wheels.

“Um, I can’t think of anything else to pack. Gran said not to bring loads. There isn’t a lot of space on the canal boat, so I’ve just got my jeans, some shorts and a couple of T-shirts and a sweater. But you’re coming over to visit on Sunday, anyway, aren’t you? So you can bring me some more clothes if I need them.”

Then she gasped. “Oh, but I need to pack for Fred! I didn’t think about that.” She looked doubtfully at her suitcase. There was no way Fred’s food and bowls were going to fit in there, let alone all his toys. And his cushion.



Her mum laughed. “I think your gran might not mind if he brought his own bag. Just not too many toys, OK?”

Anna sighed. It was going to be hard to choose which ones to take. She was always buying Fred things with her pocket money, so he had loads of toys. His favourites were definitely all the ones that squeaked – he would play with them for ages. If Anna was too busy to throw them for him to fetch, he

would do it himself. He'd worked out that he could swing his toy around in his teeth and let go, then he would chase it down the hallway and fling himself at it, skidding along on the smooth wooden floor.

Perhaps she could set out a line-up for him and see which ones he chose? But then his favourite seemed to change every day.

"Come and have some breakfast," her mum suggested. "We need to set off for the boat pretty soon."

Anna put the bags in the hallway, and then returned to the kitchen, giving her mum a hug as she came in.

"Oh! That was nice, what was that for?" her mum asked, hugging her back tightly.

"I'll miss you, that's all. And Dad. I'm really looking forward to staying on the boat with Gran and Grandad, but it'll be the first time I've stayed away without you."

"You'll have a lovely time," her mum said reassuringly. "And you're only on the boat tomorrow and Saturday before we come and see you."

"I'll have Fred as well!" Anna smiled, pouring cornflakes into her bowl and reaching for the milk jug.

Fred, who had been sniffing at one of his rubber bones that had somehow managed to get itself wedged under the fridge, leaped up excitedly as he heard his name. Anna was calling him!

He darted over to the table, skidding

like he always did on the smooth floor, and hurled himself lovingly at Anna's legs.

Anna squeaked and tipped the milk. It flooded over the edge of her bowl and across the table, dripping all over Fred's feathery, dark red fur.

He looked up at her, his big dark eyes confused. Why was he all wet? What had happened? He shook himself, and drops of milk went all over the kitchen.

"Oh, Fred..." Mum and Anna groaned at the same time. It was something they said quite a lot.

"I hope he's going to be all right on the boat," Mum went on. "It's such a small space, and he isn't very good at being cooped up, is he?"

Anna looked down at her puppy, who was now licking the milky drops off his nose with a thoughtful expression. Then he gazed up at the table again, obviously wondering how to get himself some more.



"No!" Anna moved the bowl away from the edge of the table and shook her head at him sternly. Mum was right. Fred was a wide open spaces sort of dog. They'd known before they got him that Irish Setters needed lots of exercise – at least one really good long walk (or run, really) every day. Plus it was best if they had a garden to run around in.

That was partly why they'd chosen to get an Irish Setter, when they'd all talked

about what sort of dog they'd like. Anna had originally thought it would be fun to have a tiny dog, like a Chihuahua. She'd imagined sneaking the puppy into her backpack and taking him to school. But her dad had pointed out that a Chihuahua probably wouldn't be able to walk very far, and what they wanted was a dog to go on brilliant walks with.

Although their house was in a town, it was right on the edge and there was a big, wild sort of park close to where they lived. Then, if they got in the car, it only took about ten minutes to drive to a huge wood that they could explore.

And the only thing that would make all their walks even better was a dog...

Anna hadn't minded not having a Chihuahua as soon as Dad had showed

her the email from the lady who had the Irish Setter puppies for sale. There were photos attached and they were so gorgeous. Anna didn't think she'd ever seen an Irish Setter before and she had never imagined a dog that colour – a sort of dark, autumn-leaves red, but with such a shine to it.

In the best photo, the puppies were all asleep, squashed up together in a basket so that Anna could hardly tell where one puppy ended and another began. Random paws and ears were sticking out all over the place, and one of the puppies was nearly falling out of the basket, but was so deeply asleep that he hadn't even noticed.

When they went to see the puppies a couple of days later, Anna was sure that

she could tell which one had been half out of the basket. He had the same huge, curly-haired ears. And when he had curled up in Anna's lap and stretched himself luxuriously, his paws stuck out in that same clumsy way. As Anna ran her hand over his soft head, and he yawned and snuggled deeper into her fleece, she had known that he was just the right puppy for them.

Anna looked down at Fred – he was so much bigger now. “I’ll be able to take him for long walks along the towpath, won’t I?” she said to Mum. “He’ll love that. He might even want to swim! Irish Setters are supposed to be good in the water.” She reached down and stroked his ears. “I bet you’d be a great swimmer, wouldn’t you?”



Mum looked at the puppy, sipping her tea. “Actually, I’m not sure that’s such a good idea. The canal banks are pretty steep at the sides – they go straight down into the water. If Fred jumps in, he might have a hard time getting out again. And the canal’s deep. Fred’s probably better off waiting until we go to the seaside for his first swim.” She grinned at Anna. “Then he can go into the sea with you!”

“Mmmm.” Anna nodded. “I hadn’t thought about how he’d get out again. I hope he doesn’t want to jump off the boat. But Sunny never does that, does he?”

Sunny was Gran and Grandad’s black Labrador. He always went with them on their canal boat, the *Hummingbird*. He would sit in the bow or on the roof posing, with a noble expression on his face, so people on the towpath always wanted to take photos of him. He was also very, very well-trained. Anna and Mum had taken Fred to training classes, and he was pretty good, but he was still a bit of a scatty pup compared to perfect Sunny. Anna was fairly certain that if she put a delicious plate of sausages

down in front of Sunny and told him to guard it, he would stay there watching the sausages for ever, if necessary. He wouldn’t even sniff at them.

Fred, on the other hand, would wolf the sausages down in seconds, but Anna didn’t really mind. She did worry that when she let Fred off the lead she wasn’t always sure if he’d come back again. At least, not if there was something more interesting going on – like a really nice bit of rubbish he wanted to eat first.

Dad said it was all about the voice, and Anna just had to try and sound firmer. But Anna had noticed that Fred didn’t always come back first time for Dad, either.