

A Dog's Life

By

Gary Whitmore

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Chapter 1

It was a beautiful early cloudless day in May in the city of New Castle located in the western area of Pennsylvania.

On the eastern outskirts of New Castle, was a new housing development being built by the Hanson's Construction Company. This new development was called Highland Estates with thirty new homes constructed and planned to have a nice woody country landscape.

At the entrance of the construction site just passed the fenced gate was the office for Hanson's Construction, which consisted of a single wide old trailer.

The owner of this company was Mike Hanson; was of average height and average sized potbelly for men of his age group. Mike was still a handsome man with a sprinkle of gray hairs that started to peek through his full head of brown hair. Mike inherited the business from his father, Ernst, who founded it in 1960.

It was now 4:30 in the afternoon and the music of power saws and air hammers pounding nails in those thirty homes just ceased to indicate

the end of another workday.

Mike stepped out of his office trailer and watched while his workers headed off to their cars and pick up trucks parked in the dirt parking lot. They were all smiles, as most of them planned on meeting for a few beers before heading home.

“Great progress today, guys. See you tomorrow morning bright and early,” he called out to some of the workers while they got into their vehicles.

A few of the workers acknowledged Mike with some waves or nods of their heads.

“We’re going out for a few beers over at The Pounding Hammer bar. Want to join us, Mike?” one of his workers offered.

“Nah, I have tons of paperwork to finish, you know, paychecks,” Mike responded.

“Well, then, I think you should get back to work,” another worker replied jokingly then got inside his pick up truck.

Mike went back inside his trailer and walked over to the coffee pot. He poured a cup of coffee then walked over to his desk scattered with paperwork and a checkbook. He frowned when he stared at the large checkbook and hated

office work. Sometimes he wished he were out there pounding nails into two by fours. He took a sip of coffee and returned to his duties.

The trailer door opened and entered foreman Russ Gates. Russ was a tall and lanky man whose skin had seen years of working construction out in the sun. Russ was hired by Mike's father back in 1975 and had continued to be a valuable asset with helping Mike's company make a comfortable profit.

"Progress is looking great with the units," Russ said while he removed the hard hat off his head and sat down at his desk. He kicked his black Steel Toed boots up on his desk. He ran his hand through his gray thinning hair while he yawned.

"Good, are there any concerns with making our August deadline?" Mike asked then sipped some coffee.

"No indications yet," Russ replied then placed his boots on the floor and stood up. "I'm going out for a few beers with the guys at The Pounding Hammer. Want to join me?" he offered.

"Thanks, but I need to get the payroll finished," Mike answered then sipped some more coffee.

“Well, don’t stay here all night,” Russ replied then walked to the door. “I’ll see you in the morning,” he said then stepped out of the trailer.

Mike went back to work writing out paychecks for his workers.

Russ walked over to his Chevy Silverado pickup truck.

Twenty feet away, a mangy looking female reddish haired terrier mix mutt named Ginger, snuck out of the construction site through a hole she dug under the chain link fence.

Russ got into his pickup truck and drove out of the construction site and onto the two-lane country road.

Ginger moped away from the fence and headed toward the two-lane country road.

Fifteen minutes later, Mike walked out of his trailer and locked the door.

He walked over to his Ford F-250 pickup and got inside. He started it up and drove out of the construction site. He stopped, got out of his truck and locked the fenced gate to the site. He got back in his pickup and drove off down the

two-lane country road.

A little while later, he turned on his radio and the Aerosmith's *Walk This Way* song played.

Mike sang along with Steven Tyler and played some air guitar while he steered with his knees. He felt like a rock star.

Then he spotted Ginger while she moped down the road on the right hand side. An evil smirk grew on his face while he accelerated his pickup. He raced after the stray dog.

Then the second the front of his pickup was by Ginger, he blew his horn.

Ginger got startled and jumped off the road and landed in a big mud puddle on the side of the road.

Mike glanced in his rearview mirror and saw Ginger while she stepped out of the puddle, soaking wet. She shook off the water. She continued to mope down the road.

He chuckled and felt proud of himself. "Stupid ugly mutt," he said then returned to his song and sang along with Steven Tyler while he drove down the road.

In Mike's neighborhood down on Kiscoe Avenue was Louise LeBlanc. She had long white hair with a couple of purple dyed streaks

down the side. She walked down the sidewalk with a limp and a hand carved wooden cane. She was a spooky woman from New Orleans and spoke with a thick Cajun accent. A monstrous male black Mastiff dog named Boodro walked alongside Louise where he was connected to a leash.

Louise and Boodro walked down the sidewalk and walked across Mike's driveway.

Mike pulled his pickup into his driveway and blew his horn.

Louise felt threatened by his pickup so she bolted across his front yard dragging Boodro by the leash choking him. She stopped and glared back at Mike with her hatred in her eyes.

"I hope that stupid Boodro didn't use my front yard as a bathroom!" Mike said the second he got out of his pickup and walked to his front door.

"You shouldn't treat your neighbors that way!" Louise scolded Mike with her right index finger.

"I don't consider a dog or a weird voodoo lady neighbors. If I had my way, I would give him to that new Chinese restaurant down the street. And deport you back to New Orleans!" Mike replied with a mean tone.

Louise hissed at him like a mad cat.
Boodro snarled and showed his teeth.

“Give me five seconds alone with him.
Just five seconds,” Boodro quietly said to
himself.

Louise walked Boodro across Mike's
yard to her light purple painted house, which was
next door.

Mike walked to his front door.

The Hanson home was nicely furnished.

The living room had a mahogany wood
entertainment center with a 52-inch HDTV on a
stand, nice expensive beige couch, and plush
lazy boy chair on oak wood floors.

“I want that voodoo queen and her ugly
mutt to stay off my grass!” Mike said the second
he stepped foot into his living room.

Jenny Hanson, Mike's young daughter
rushed into the living room. “Daddy!” she cried
out with a huge smile.

Then Chris Hanson, Mike's young son
rushed into the living room after Jenny. He had
a baseball glove in his hand.

Mike knelt down and gave Jenny a hug
the second she rushed up to him.

“Daddy, will you have a catch with me?”

Chris said while he held up his glove and baseball with hopeful eyes.

“Daddy will you join my tea party?” Jenny asked with a gleam in her eye.

“Maybe another day kids, daddy's exhausted from a hard day at work,” he said while he walked over and plopped down on his lazy boy chair. He grabbed the remote off a small table next to the chair and turned on his TV.

Debbie Hanson, Mike's lovely blonde haired wife with soft brown eyes entered in a jogging outfit and stood at the archway.

Chris and Jenny moped out of the living room rejected.

Debbie watched while Jenny and Chris moped down the hallway and went inside their bedrooms.

“What did you say to them Mike?” she asked a little concerned.

“That creepy voodoo lady,” he answered.

“Her name is Louise LeBlanc and please don't make her mad,” Debbie quickly interrupted him.

“Whatever, anyway, she had her huge ugly dog in our yard again,” he replied while he surfed through the channels.

Debbie eyed the hallway. “No, I want to know what you said to Chris and Jenny to upset them?” she asked but knew the answer.

“They wanted to play, but I'm too exhausted, Debbie,” he replied while he stopped on the ESPN channel.

“You better get some energy before the kids are all grown up and will eventually want nothing to do with you,” she snapped back.

“I hear you,” Mike replied but he could really care less, as all he wanted to do was relax and watch TV.

She rolled her eyes knowing she was fighting a losing battle against his thick head. “I'm going jogging, I'll make dinner after my five mile run. Try and get up some energy and give them some attention,” she said then walked to the front door and went outside.

Mike kicked back in his lazy boy chair the second the front door closed. He and watched the ESPN channel.

A little while later, Mike sat in another lazy boy chair in their fourth bedroom, which was his playroom. On the wall of Mike's man cave were pictures of his life. They were mainly construction jobs he was proud of completing.

One was his first house he helped his father build. And another picture was of Mike when he was a lad. That picture was a fond memory of Mike with a hammer in hand and a huge grin on his face. He was in the process of building a dog house and was nailing on the roof planks. Over the opening was painted “Scruffles.”

Mike banged out the rhythm to Aerosmith’s *Train Keep A Rollin* song on his pristine and pride and joy Sunburst Les Paul guitar. He was an accomplished guitarist. He had cherished memories of those days more than twenty years ago when he played in the band called The Rockers. It was during high school and they thought they were the tops.

Debbie entered the den all sweaty in her jogging outfit. She glanced over at Mike and frowned. “I guess you’re not too tired to play your guitar?”

“When’s dinner?” Mike replied ignoring her question while he continued to bang out that rhythm.

“After I take a shower and hopefully in twenty minutes if I’m not too tired,” she replied imitating Michael.

She walked away upset with him.

Mike could care less while he continued

to bang out his rhythm song on his Les Paul.

Later that evening, the Hanson family sat around the dining room table and ate their spaghetti with meatballs dinner.

“Chris has a little league game this Saturday and Jenny has a ballet recital,” Debbie told Mike.

He frowned while he sipped his ice tea. “I can't Debbie, the crew's working Saturday. I could get a nice bonus for finishing this project early,” Mike replied then he munched on a meatball.

“You're always working on Saturdays. Can't you spend a weekend having some fun with the family for once?” Debbie in a raised tone he knew all too well that he was in trouble.

“I'm sorry honey, somebody has to work to pay for our lifestyle,” he quickly replied then looked at Jenny and Chris. “So kids, how was your day at school?” he asked to get Debbie off his back.

“Carey Whitestone barfed in class so we had to stand in the hallway while the janitor cleaned the room. It stunk!” Jenny said then she slurped up some spaghetti noodles adding to her tomato paste lipstick.

“Don’t use the word barf, Jenny. Just say Carey go sick in class,” said Debbie.

“Joey Brooke showed us his new puppy. Can we get a puppy?” Chris said with hopeful eyes.

Mike frowned at his request. “You know how I feel about dogs. All they do is use the house as a bathroom and chew toy.”

“But Mommy talked with Uncle Kenny and he has a new puppy at the shelter,” Chris added with a gleam in his eyes at the prospect of playing ball with a puppy.

Mike gave Debbie a stern look. “I don't think so, they're a waste of precious money.”

“But they’re so cute!” Jenny added.

“Remember Scruffles?” Debbie asked Mike knowing this would touch a sore spot.

Mike ignored everybody and continued to eat his dinner.

Debbie discreetly winked at Chris and Jenny.

They both smiled and knew what her winks meant.

Chapter 2

It was another beautiful morning in New Castle.

The Hanson household woke up, ate their breakfast and then Mike was off to work.

Debbie did her normal routine of getting the kids ready for school.

Then she went off to work as a bank teller in town.

At his construction site, Mike wore his hard hat while he walked with Russ down the main street of the new neighborhood.

The music of nail guns and saws filled the air while the workers worked on the homes in various phases of construction.

“Looks like our load of plywood for the roofs of units twenty-five thru thirty will be arriving a little late,” said Russ.

“When will it arrive?” Mike asked a little concerned.

“In five days,” Russ replied then he cringed a little.

“Five days? I can't wait five days,” Mike

said worried that the good progress will slow down.

“I know.”

Then something caught Mike’s attention while he looked at a framed house while they turned and headed down another street.

While he looked at this framed house, he did not notice the white Chevy government car that just parked at one of the homes down the end of that street.

Mike walked Russ to the framed house and they saw Ginger in the living room area. She was munched down on part of a sandwich on the plywood floor.

“Get out of here you ugly mangy mutt!” Mike yelled at Ginger while he ran over to the framed house. He picked up a sawed off piece of 2x4 board then ran through the framed front door opening.

They didn’t notice the government Chevy while it drove down that street and turned onto the main street.

Ginger saw Mike with the board in his hand and she knew this meant trouble - again. She grabbed the sandwich and ran between the openings of the framed outside wall.

Mike ran back through the front door

opening and ran across the dirt yard after her.

He threw the 2x4 piece of board and it bounced in the ground a foot behind Ginger's running paws.

Mike walked back to Russ who stood in the front yard and saw the whole event.

"Tell the crew I don't want them leaving food around the site. And check the perimeter fence for any gaping holes in the fence or under it," Mike ordered while he watched Ginger run away to the perimeter fence. "Also have someone check the property to make sure that dog is gone," he added.

"Got it boss," Russ replied while he saw a worker walk out of the framed house. "Hey Jack, boss man wants you to check the perimeter and make sure that stray dog is gone. Then check it for holes in the fence or under it," Russ called out.

"Okay boss," Jack replied but he was the one that had been leaving Ginger food. He will pretend he fulfilled his order from Russ.

Mike and Russ walked back to the main street and headed toward the office trailer.

A few minutes later, they walked back to the trailer where that government Chevy was

parked.

“This is just great. OSHA is here,” Mike replied as he recognized the car from previous visits.

They walked to the trailer with some hesitation.

Mike and Russ entered the trailer where Danny Malone, an OSHA Compliance Officer sat at Mike’s desk and wrote on a pad that contained a government form.

Danny saw Mike at the door of the trailer. “Good morning, Mister Hanson,” Danny said while he stood up and tore off the form from the pad. “I found four of your guys not wearing eye protection when using some power saws while cutting two by fours,” he said then handed Mike the citations. “I saw this three months ago and gave you a verbal warning,” Danny said then walked to the door then left the trailer.

Mike slammed the form down on his desk. “Now I have to deal with these OSHA citations. Can my day get any worse?” he said very upset. “I want a meeting right now with everybody,” Mike ordered Russ in a raised tone.

“Yes boss,” Russ replied then walked to the door and left the trailer.

Mike ran a hand through his hair in frustration.

Ten minutes later, Mike had his entire crew out by the trailer and gave them a good chewing at them for violating safety rules. He dismissed them back to work and he went back inside the trailer along with Russ.

Fifteen minutes later, the trailer door opened and Howard Langley, a fifty-year-old homeless man with long stringy dirty hair and a long beard stepped inside.

Howard reeked of body odor and his clothes were filthy and tattered, and stood by the door with a dirty old brown Fedora hat in hand.

“Excuse me sir, my name is Howard Langley and I'm looking for work. Any work even if it's picking up trash,” Howard asked with hungry eyes.

Mike and Russ looked over at Howard.

Russ cringed the second he smelled his body odor.

Mike couldn't smell due to some sinus problems twenty years ago.

Mike got up from his desk and walked over to Howard a little sickened by his

appearance.

“Like I've told you before, we don't have a job that's suited for you. So you better get off my property or I'll call the police,” Mike told Howard and looked serious.

“Sorry sir and bless you,” Howard replied then opened up the door and stepped outside.

Mike walked over to his desk and sat down.

“Man, it's a good thing you can't smell. That was some strong body odor,” Russ said while he sighed a sigh of relief Howard was gone.

The phone on Mike's desk rang.
“Hanson's construction,” he answered the call.

“Hi honey. How's your day going?”
Debbie asked from the phone.

“Lousy, OSHA was just here and left me a fine,” he replied.

“That's too bad, listen, I was talking with Kenny and was curious with your decision with helping him expand his animal shelter?” she asked.

Mike frowned at her request from the phone.

Inside Kenny's *I Luv Animals* shelter, Debbie sat by Kenny at his desk.

Kenny Hamilton was Debby's thirty-seven-year-old younger brother. He held Rascal, a one-year-old white haired Weshi puppy with a unique patch of brown hair on his left side, in his arms. Kenny looked hopeful while Debbie talked into her cell phone.

"I can't ask my guys to work for free on a weekend," Mike replied from her cell phone.

"You write it off as charity," she said while she petted Rascal's head.

"I'll think about it some more. I gotta go," Mike replied then disconnected his end of the call.

Kenny looked at Debbie with hopeful eyes.

Debbie shook her head and indicated Mike was not going to build his expansion.

"Oh well," Kenny replied very disappointed.

Debbie looked at Rascal in Kenny's arms, and her eyes lit up. "He sure is adorable," she said while she petted his head.

"His previous owners left him out in the woods when they didn't want to care for him. So the little guy needs a good loving home,"

Kenny said while he kissed the top of Rascal's head.

Debbie looked at Rascal and she smiled while she had an idea, as she could not resist his adorable brown eyes.

Back in Mike's trailer, he got up and walked over to the coffee pot. He poured another cup of coffee.

"Another request on expanding Kenny's shelter job?" Russ asked while Mike sat down at this desk.

"I need to come up with a good excuse to get out of it forever," Mike replied then sipped his coffee.

"I think we could handle a little charity work," Russ quietly replied to himself while he went back to ordering some lumber.

Mike ignored him and went back to his paperwork.

It was later that evening and Mike pulled his pickup truck into his driveway. He frowned when he had to park behind Kenny's Toyota Prius.

"I just don't feel like dealing with him tonight," Mike said with a whiny tone while he

got out of his truck.

He walked across the grass and headed to the front door. Then his face suddenly cringed when something didn't feel right. He looked down at the bottom of his right boot and saw dog poop smeared all over the bottom. "That stupid voodoo woman!" he cursed while he wiped the bottom of his boot on the grass.

After his boot was cleaned, Mike went inside his house and he didn't notice Louise who stood by her front door.

She heard the mean comment he made about her, and went inside her home furious.

"I'm home," Mike called out while he closed the front door. He heard laughter that came from the bedrooms. He smiled at the thought of Jenny and Chris having fun.

Then Rascal raced into the living room. He stopped five feet from Mike and wagged his tail. He ran up to Mike and jumped up on his legs wagging his tail.

"Get this dog out of here!" Mike yelled out.

Rascal raced out of the room, scared with his tail between his legs.

Jenny and Chris ran into the room.

“Daddy, you scared Rascal,” Jenny scolded her father.

“Rascal? Why is there a dog in my house?” Mike asked a little upset.

Kenny and Debbie entered the living room.

Mike frowned. “Kenny, don't bring your animals in my house. Keep them at the shelter where they belong,” he said.

“But daddy, Uncle Kenny gave us Rascal,” Chris told him.

Rascal poked his head around the wall from the hallway to see if it was safe. He gave Mike the sweetest brown eyes he could muster. He crawled on his belly at Mike to become friends.

“I told you, I don't want a stupid dog. They're useless!” Mike yelled while he glared down at Rascal on his belly.

Rascal sensed his hatred and got up on all fours. He made a quick turn around and ran out of the room and down the hallway.

“How could you not want a beautiful dog like Rascal?” Kenny asked a little upset with Mike.

“Jenny and Chris, go play with Rascal in one of your rooms,” Debbie told them while she

glared at Mike.

Jenny and Chris ran out of the living room and then down the hallway.

Debbie looked mad with Mike while she walked up to him “What's wrong with you? You had a dog when you were a kid,” she said in a raised tone.

“Yeah and the stupid thing got rabies, bit me and I had to get all those shots along with six stitches,” Mike replied. “Then dad shot it,” he added.

“Not all dogs get rabies, Mike,” Kenny said and felt sorry for Mike feeling the way he does about dogs.

“Did you see how much those kids love him?” Debbie asked.

“He'll stink up the house,” Mike quickly replied.

“You can't smell and besides, this is my decision and Rascal stays!” Debbie said and gave Mike a look that meant she wasn't going to back down.

Mike opened his mouth to say something, but immediately closed it when he saw Jenny, Chris and Rascal poke their heads around the hallway with hopeful eyes.

“That thing can stay, but under my

conditions. One, the mutt sleeps in the back porch,” he said.

“Ahh Dad!” Jenny and Chris replied in unison from the hallway.

“Like I said, he sleeps in the back porch. Two, you'll clean up any mess he makes in the house or in my yard. Three, you'll feed and give him water, as I won't. Four, he's not allowed in my den and I emphasize not allowed. And five, he's not allowed in the kitchen. If any of these rules are violated, the mutt goes out the front door,” Mike said and meant business.

Jenny and Chris jumped up and down in excitement. Rascal joined along not knowing why they were happy but it appeared to be a good thing to do at the time.

They ran down the hallway, and Rascal ran after them.

Debbie and Kenny smiled.

“I better go,” Kenneth said then headed to the door.

“That would be nice,” Mike replied under his breath.

Debbie opened the door for Kenny, and he gave her a quick kiss on her cheek then went outside. She closed the door and looked upset with Mike.

Debbie glared at Mike. “You know, it wouldn't hurt for you to be nice to my brother, for once!” she scolded him then walked out of the living room.

Rascal inched his way back in the living room. He looked at Mike, who lunged at Rascal.

Rascal ran away scared down the hallway.

Mike looked proud of himself while he sat down in his lazy boy chair and turned on the TV.

A little while later, Debbie snapped a digital picture of Rascal with Jenny and Chris. She emailed it to her mother, down in Orlando, Florida, who quickly replied a little while later stating Rascal was adorable.

It was later that night and quiet in the Hanson household.

Mike and Debbie slept in their bedroom. Then Rascal was heard while he cried and howled, from the screened-in back porch, scared from being left alone in the dark porch.

Mike woke up and heard Rascal. He nudged Debbie's sleeping body. “Shut that mutt up,” he said then rolled over.

Debbie placed her pillow over her head and ignored him.

After a few minutes of Rascal crying and howling, Mike couldn't take it any longer and got out of bed. He placed his feet on the floor and his face immediately cringed and looked grossed out. "That mutt vomited on the carpet," he told Debbie who was asleep and didn't hear him.

Mike hobbled out of the bedroom with one foot off the floor then hobbled into the bathroom.

After he washed the bottom of his foot, he rushed down the hallway.

Louise entered her back porch with a Homes For Sale magazine for the New Castle area in one hand and a glass of wine in her other hand.

She sat down and opened up the magazine then sipped her wine. Boodro entered the back porch and lay down next to Louise.

She heard Rascal cry and howl from Mike's back porch. She curiously peeked over her magazine.

Boodro jumped up on all fours and looked over at Mike's back porch when he heard

another dog.

“He got a dog? No way,” she said while she continued to hear Rascal cry.

“Shut up you ugly mutt!” Mike was heard when he stuck his head into his back porch.

“Yep, he got a dog,” Louise said then got a smirk.

“That dog’s a whiner,” Boodro said while he looked at Mike’s back porch.

Louise looked down at Boodro. “I can arrange for you to sleep outside!” she threatened him.

“On second thought, poor guy,” Boodro replied.

Boodro and Louise stared at Mike's porch while Rascal got quiet.

Chapter 3

It was the next morning and Mike did not talk to Debbie or the kids while he got ready for work.

Later that morning, Russ reviewed blueprints at his desk in the office trailer.

Mike entered with bags under his eyes. He was exhausted and Russ noticed. “You look awful.”

“I didn't sleep a wink last night?” Mike replied while he walked over to the coffee pot and poured a cup.

He walked over to his desk and plopped down in his chair.

“Playing the guitar all night?” Russ asked.

“I wish, but no, that stupid dog was crying all night,” Mike replied.

“The Voodoo neighbor dog?”

“No. Debbie got the kids a puppy,” Mike replied then sipped his coffee.

Russ looked at unsure he heard correctly. “Did you say that Debbie got the kids a puppy?”

Russ asked to verify what he thought he heard.

“Yep, an ugly mutt,” Mike replied then drank some more coffee.

“Are you kidding me?”

“I’m not, but it won’t last long,” Mike said while he drank some more coffee to get motivated for the workday.

“Why do you say that?”

“I laid down some rules and I know in a couple of weeks, they’ll break them,” Mike answered with a smile knowing the puppy will be gone soon.

“It would do you good to have a dog. They’re man’s best friend,” Russ said while he got up from his desk and walked over to the coffee pot with his cup.

Mike glanced out his window and saw some of his workers at a nearby house feeding Ginger in the dirt front yard. He jumped up from his desk and ran over to the door.

“They’re also like,” Russ said then the slamming of the office door while Mike ran outside stopped him.

“Family,” Russ finished while he walked over the windows and watched while Mike was outside running over to that house.

Mike ran to those workers who fed
Ginger.

“Quit feeding that thing! It might have
some type of disease!” Mike screamed at his
workers.

They quickly scrambled back to their
work locations the second they saw Mike
running mad at them.

Ginger saw Mike and she ran away as
fast as her little paws could move.

Mike walked back to his trailer and went
inside.

“All I need is that mutt getting hurt on
my site, then I’ll have those SPCA and PETA
freaks picketing outside my gate,” he said while
he walked back and sat down at his desk.

Russ rolled his eyes then returned to his
work knowing it would be pointless to discuss
this any further with Mike.

It was 6:00 p.m., and Mike drove his
pickup home fretting seeing Rascal.

Mike pulled his pickup in the driveway
and parked.

He got out with a newspaper in hand and
went through the front door.

The second Mike entered through the front door he saw a puddle on his nice expensive wooden floor. He instantly got mad. “That dog of yours made a mess on my floor. It's going to ruin it,” he yelled out.

A few seconds later, Rascal poked his head into the living room from the hallway.

Mike saw Rascal and immediately rolled up his newspaper. He ran after Rascal who immediately ran down the hallway.

The second Mike stepped into the puddle on the floor, his shoes went out from under him and he landed on his butt and splashed in the puddle.

He cringed when the puddle started to soak through his pants.

Debbie walked into the living room with a rag and cleaning solution to eliminate doggie odors. She saw Mike while he got up from the puddle and saw the huge wet spot on the seat of his pants. “I guess I don't need the rag,” she said with a chuckle.

Mike fumed. “If this keeps up, that dog will be out of here,” he said then stormed out of the room and went to his bathroom to change pants.

Debbie shrugged off his comment while she got on her knees and wiped up the remaining puddle deposited by Rascal.

Later that night, Mike sat barefooted in his lazy boy chair while he watched the ESPN channel on his TV.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Rascal while he zoomed down the hallway toward the kitchen. Jenny and Chris laughed while they raced after him.

Mike got irritated. "No running in the house!" he yelled then he returned to watching ESPN.

Then from the corner of his eye, he saw Rascal run back down the hallway toward the bedrooms. Jenny and Chris were hot on his tail.

"I said, no running in the house!" Mike yelled a little louder. Then he heard a splash come from the bathroom and he got mad. "What are you doing in there?" Mike yelled a little louder.

"We're giving Rascal a bath," Debbie yelled back from the bathroom.

"In the house? That's what the outside hose is for," Mike yelled out.

"No Daddy! Bathtubs are for baths,"

Jenny corrected him from the bathroom.

Mike rolled his eyes then heard more splashes and giggles from Jenny and Chris from the bathroom.

“No Rascal! Come back!” Debbie yelled out from the bathroom.

Rascal raced slopping wet into the living room. His paws slipped out from under him and he slid across the floor. He slammed into Mike’s feet and came to a stop.

Rascal stood up and shook himself and sprayed water all over Mike. He got furious with Rascal. “That dog is getting the wooden floor and me wet!” he yelled out.

Mike jumped out of his chair and quickly grabbed Rascal by the scruff of his neck. Rascal yelped in a little pain from Mike’s grip.

He stormed out of the living room and into the kitchen while Rascal looked terrified while he dangled from Mike’s hand.

Debbie, Jenny and Chris ran into the kitchen and saw Mike with Rascal.

“Where are you taking Rascal?” Chris asked and got worried while Mike headed to the kitchen door that had a large window at the upper half.

“Outside where he belongs!” Mike said

while he got to the door.

Jenny looked concerned. “But he'll get fleas.”

“That’s not my problem,” Mike said while he opened up the door and dropped Rascal on the porch floor.

He slammed the door shut and locked it.

Jenny and Chris ran over to the door and looked out its window. They looked ever so sad while they saw Rascal who sat on the porch with the saddest puppy dog eyes.

Debbie looked furious with Mike then she stormed out of the kitchen.

Jenny and Chris’s eyes welled up while they watched Rascal who just sat on the back porch who whined to be let back inside the house.

Mike walked out of the kitchen with a smile and wiped his hands on his pants.

Later that night, everybody in the Hanson household was sound asleep.

Then the sounds of Rascal crying and howling from the porch were heard through the house.

Mike and Debbie were sound asleep in bed.

Mike woke up and realized it was Rascal he heard. "Will someone shut up that dog, or else?" Mike called out.

That woke up Debbie who looked mad at Mike. "It's your fault since you stuck him out on the back porch. You live with it!" Debbie snapped back then put her pillow over her head and went back to sleep.

Mike placed his pillow over his head to drown out the sound.

Then Jenny poked her head out of her bedroom doorway and looked up and down the hallway. The coast was clear so she stepped out in the hallway and tiptoed down the hallway to the kitchen.

She tiptoed through the kitchen and up to the door.

Outside on the porch, Rascal immediately wagged his tail the second he saw Jenny at the window in the door.

Jenny unlocked the door and opened it and Rascal immediately rushed into the kitchen. He jumped up on Jenny's legs, and wagged his tail so happy to be with her.

"Be quiet Rascal," Jenny whispered in one of his ears. She picked him up and tiptoed

back through the kitchen and down the hallway.

Jenny tiptoed into her bedroom while Rascal licked her face.

Once she was inside her bedroom, she placed Rascal on the floor then closed her door and left it cracked open about an inch.

She walked Rascal over and set him down on the edge of her bed. He wagged his tail so happy to be inside the house.

She walked over and grabbed a book off her bedside table. "I'll read you a story if you stay quiet," she told Rascal while she got under her covers.

Rascal ran over and lay on the bed and placed his head on Jenny's leg. He closed his eyes while she read him a story.

It was hours later and Jenny was sound asleep with her book in her lap.

Rascal woke up and looked around the room. He then got curious when he spotted the cracked door opening.

He got up and walked to the edge of the bed. He jumped down and walked over to the door.

He used his paw and opened up the door. He walked out into the hallway. He sat

down and looked up and down the hallway.

He got up and walked down and poked his head into Chris' bedroom.

He walked farther down the hallway and poked his head into Debbie and Mike's bedroom. He wagged his tail when he saw them sleeping in their bed.

He walked into their bedroom and jumped up on their bed.

He walked over and lay down between Mike and Debbie. He closed his eyes and fell fast asleep.

Chapter 4

The sun rose in New Castle to start another day.

Mike and Debbie were still sound sleep and Rascal slept inches from Mike's face. Rascal woke up and licked Mike's cheek, and he smiled. Rascal licked Mike's lips, and Mike kissed back with a smile.

"Mmmm! What's the occasion honey?" he said while he opened up his eyes in anticipation of Debbie kissing him. His eyes widened in shock when he saw Rascal's happy brown eyes that admired Mike. "Ahhhh!" Mike screamed and jumped out of bed.

That woke Debbie up in a panic and she jumped up and looked around to see the emergency. "What happened?" she asked a little bewildered, as to why Mike screamed.

"That ugly mutt kissed my lips!" Mike yelled out while he pointed at Rascal who cowered in fear on the bed.

Debbie saw Rascal and laughed. "Come here boy," Debbie called out to the dog.

Rascal quickly ran to her and wagged his tail.

“Get this dog out of my room,” Mike yelled out then frantically wiped his lips with the sleeve of his tee shirt.

Debbie chuckled some more while she took Rascal out of their bedroom.

Later that morning, the Hanson’s sat down for breakfast.

Jenny and Chris at their Cocoa Krispies at the kitchen table.

Debbie cooked some scrambled eggs and bacon for Mike on the stove. Rascal sat on the floor near her and watched with a vigil eye in hopes she would accidently drop food on the floor.

Mike entered the kitchen dressed for work, and had a look of disapproval the second he saw Rascal. “We need to talk. I’ve just about had enough with this dog,” Mike told Debbie while he crossed his arms.

“About what?” she replied with a tone that she knew what was coming next.

“About what? I’ll tell you about what. This dog broke the rules I established,” Mike snapped back with a raised tone.

Jenny and Chris looked upset while they glanced over at Mike.

“Lighten up. He's only a puppy. He doesn't mean any harm,” Debbie said while she scooped up some eggs and placed them on a plate.

Mike walked over and grabbed Rascal by the scruff of his neck. Rascal yelped in pain.

“Daddy, you're hurting, Rascal!” Jenny cried out concerned.

Mike ignored Jenny's concern. “Like I said, he's not allowed in the kitchen,” he said while he walked over to the kitchen door. He opened it and dropped Rascal onto the floor of the back porch. He slammed the door closed and locked it.

Rascal stood by the door with the saddest brown eyes wanting to be inside with his new family.

Jenny and Chris got up from the table and rushed over to the door. They looked upset when they saw Rascal who looked so sad.

“You're a meany Daddy!” Jenny called out and ran out of the kitchen then down the hallway, and to her bedroom.

“Yeah, a meany!” Chris joined in and ran out of the kitchen then down the hallway, and to

his bedroom.

Debbie looked at Mike with his plate of eggs and bacon in her hand. She looked at Mike and got mad. She walked over and opened up the cabinet under the sink. She dumped Mike's breakfast into the trash then set his plate in the sink.

“What are you doing?” he asked her.

“Make your own breakfast, meany!” she said at a raised voice at Mike then walked over to the kitchen table and grabbed the kids cereal bowls.

Mike walked out of the kitchen knowing he better leave for work.

Debbie walked over and set the kids cereal bowls in the sink. She waited for Mike to leave the house.

After a few minutes, she heard Mike leave through the front door. It was safe so she walked over and opened the kitchen door.

Rascal ran inside and jumped up on Debbie's legs with his tail wagging.

He ran out of the kitchen and down to the hallway to be with the kids while they got ready for school.

Thirty minutes later, Mike entered his

office trailer with a Burger King bag in hand.

Russ reviewed some blueprints and looked up at Mike while he sat down at his desk looking upset. He opened up the bag and removed a Sausage Egg and Cheese Butty sandwich and a large cup of coffee.

Mike took a bite out of his breakfast sandwich and stared out the windows in deep thought.

Russ knew something was wrong and waited a few seconds while Mike chewed. “What’s bugging you? That OSHA citation bugging you?” Russ asked a little concerned then he sipped his coffee. “When do you meet with them?” he added.

“Tomorrow morning at eight and I want you there. And I’m not worried about them,” Mike replied.

“Then what’s eating you?”

“It’s that dumb dog. I have to find a way to get rid of it,” Mike said then took another bite of his sandwich.

“What’s wrong with having a dog?” Russ asked.

“He’s ruining my home life,” Mike replied then sipped some coffee.

“That’s too bad as like I said before, a

dog is known to be man's best friend.”

“Not this man! I hate dogs with a passion,” Mike replied then took another bite of his sandwich.

Russ rolled his eyes and knew it would not be worth his time to argue against Mike’s thick head.

Mike stared out the window while he sipped his coffee. He noticed some scrap plywood and 2x4 boards on the front dirt yard of a nearby house. His eyes widened with an idea. He got up from his desk and rushed over to the door.

Russ watched curiously while Mike rushed out of the door. He looked out the windows and saw Mike rush over to that house with the scrap wood. He watched while Mike rushed inside the house.

A few seconds later, Mike came back out of that house with one of the carpenters and they walked over to the scrap wood. He watched while Mike removed some cash from his wallet and gave it to the carpenter who shoved it into his pants pocket.

“What is he up to?” Russ asked curiously while he watched Mike walk back to the trailer and the carpenter picking up some scrap wood

and walked it inside the house.

Russ sat back down at his desk and returned to reviewing his blueprints.

Mike entered the trailer and sat back down at his desk with a bit of a smile. He started working on his paperwork.

Later that evening, Mike returned home from work and backed his pickup truck into his backyard. In the back of his pickup was a dog house built out of that scrap wood from the house on his construction site.

From her back porch, Louise watched while Mike man handled the dog house out of his pickup and then moved it to under a shade tree.

Mike then walked back to his pickup and got out a piece of re-bar and a sledge hammer. He walked back to the dog house and proceeded to pound the re-bar into the ground.

From her back porch, Louise shook her head in displeasure with the sight of the dog house.

From the back porch of Mike's house, Debbie, Jenny and Chris watched while Mike

connected a dog chain to the re-bar. Rascal sat and watched and looked curiously at Mike.

“Why is he putting that little house in our backyard?” Jenny asked curiously.

“It’s called a dog house and I think it’s for Rascal,” Chris replied and looked upset.

“Rascal can’t live there! He lives with us inside our home. Right mommy?” Jenny said then looked up with Debbie with sad eyes.

Debbie looked at Jenny then looked upset with Mike. “Let’s go inside and eat dinner,” she told the kids.

They all went inside while Mike got inside his pickup and drove out of the back yard.

A little while later, Mike walked into the dining room where Debbie and the kids ate dinner.

“What’s with that dog house?” Debbie asked but knew the answer.

“That mutt will live outside starting after dinner. Starting this weekend, I’m going to fence in the backyard so the mutt can run around and play with the kids all they want,” Mike said while he sat down at the table.

Jenny and Chris gave him the cold treatment while they ate dinner.

Later that evening, Debbie, Jenny and Chris watched while Mike chained Rascal to his chain on the re-bar.

“Mommy, Rascal will die out there. He needs to be inside here were we can take care of him,” Jenny cried out while her eyes welled up

“Don’t worry, honey, he won’t die out there,” Debbie assured them.

Mike walked away from Rascal.

Rascal ran toward the house. He was quickly jerked back by his neck the second the chain reached the end of its length.

During the rest of the evening, Mike played his Les Paul guitar in his den since the whole family gave him the cold shoulder. He didn’t worry because he actually believed they would come around in a few days after Rascal got use to living outside.

While Mike played his guitar, Jenny and Chris watched Rascal still chained up from the back porch and they looked ever so sad.

Debbie walked up to the kids and felt so sorry for them. “Don’t worry, we’ll bring him inside when daddy’s not around. It’s our secret,

okay?" she said then winked at them.

Jenny and Chris felt better.

They walked out of the porch and ran through the backyard to be with Rascal.

Debbie left the porch and went back inside the house.

She walked into the den while Mike played his Les Paul.

"What's wrong with you?" she said while she stood in the doorway with her arms crossed.

"What do you mean?" Mike responded while he stopped playing his guitar.

"How could you keep Rascal outside in the elements?" she said while she glared at him.

"Dogs belong outside as nature intended," he replied.

"I don't believe you!"

"Sorry, but the rules I established were broken and he's never allowed in the house. That dog's closer to being off my property for good," Mike said then went back to playing his guitar.

Debbie stormed away in a huff.

It was later that night and everybody was asleep in the Hanson household and it was quiet in the neighborhood.

The screen door to the back porch opened and Jenny sneaked outside in her pajamas over to Rascal's dog house.

She ran out of his house and up to her so happy to see someone, as it was lonely being outside.

Jenny unchained him and picked him up. "You have to be quiet while inside the house while mister meany's there," she whispered in Rascal's ear.

He licked her face so happy to be with her.

Jenny went back inside the house and quietly walked into her bedroom. She closed her door.

The sound of thunder was heard outside while a storm approached New Castle.

Chapter 5

The rays of the morning sunrise peeked through the window blinds of Mike and Debbie's bedroom.

Mike woke up to the sunshine. He realized it was morning and he tapped Debbie on her shoulder. "Time to make breakfast for the kids," he said then yawned.

Debbie woke up and glanced at the alarm clock. She noticed that it flashed "3:00." It took a few seconds for it to sink in then she panicked. "The power went out last night!" she yelled out then grabbed her watch off the bedside table and checked the time. It was 7:30 a.m. and they normally get up at 7:00 a.m. "The kids are going to be late for school!" she cried out in a panic while she jumped out of bed.

Mike closed his eyes for some additional sleep. Then it dawned on him what she said and his eyes widened in a panic. "I'm going to miss my meeting with OSHA!" he cried out and jumped out of bed. He raced into their bathroom while Debbie raced out of the bedroom.

Down the hallway, Rascal poked his head out of Jenny's crack bedroom door to check out the commotion. He saw Debbie race into Chris' room.

"Wake up Chris. You're going to be late for school!" she called out to Chris from his room.

Rascal sensed something was not right so he ran back into Jenny's bedroom and quickly crawled under her bed.

Debbie rushed into Jenny's bedroom. "Wake up Jenny. You're going to be late for school!" she called while she shook Jenny in bed.

Debbie rushed out of her bedroom.

From under the bed, Rascal saw Jenny's feet touch the floor. Then he watched while Jenny walked out of the bedroom still half asleep.

Rascal waited for a few seconds and slowly crawled out from under the bed when he felt it was safe.

He slowly walked to the door and poked his head out into the hallway.

He heard commotion in the bathroom. He heard commotion in the kitchen. He heard commotion in Mike's bedroom. He heard

commotion in Chris' bedroom. Mike's playroom appeared quiet so Rascal quickly ran into the hallway and into that room.

Rascal looked around Mike's playroom and was curious with all the stuff. He walked over and sniffed the Marshall guitar amplifier. *That's not very interesting.* Rascal thought to himself.

Then he walked over to the Les Paul guitar that sat on a stand. He sniffed the guitar. His nose touched one of the strings and it sang out a tone. *Now that's interesting!* Rascal thought to himself while he sniffed the guitar some more.

"I'll eat breakfast later," Mike called out from the hallway.

Rascal felt threatened by the sound of his voice and looked for a place to hide. He saw the lazy boy chair and hid behind it.

"Hurry up kids, your breakfast is ready. Come eat so I can get ready for work," Debbie called out from the hallway.

"I'm off to work," Mike called out from the front door then he left the house.

Jenny and Chris quickly ate breakfast while Debbie got ready for work.

Then Jenny and Chris rushed into their bedrooms and got dressed for school.

From behind the lazy boy chair in Mike's playroom, Rascal heard more commotion and running up and down the hallway. Then he heard a door open and closed. He heard the garage door open. He heard their Chevy Uplander start up in the garage. He heard the garage door close. The house was quiet.

Rascal walked out from behind the lazy boy chair. He waited and listened to make sure it was safe. The house was still quiet and he felt safe.

He walked over to further check out the Les Paul. He ran a paw across the strings, and they sang out. He liked that sound and ran his paw across the strings again. The guitar strings sang out louder.

He jumped up on the guitar. It swayed then the Les Paul fell off the stand and the headstock snapped off when it smacked the top of the amplifier.

This scared Rascal and he ran out of the room and into the hallway.

He sat down in the hallway and listened to the quiet house.

He headed down the hallway to the living

room where he spotted the couch and it looked so comfy and playful.

He ran over and jumped on the couch. He rolled over and scratched his back on the seat cushion. It felt so good! He got up on all fours. He looked at the seat cushion, and it looked playful. He frantically scratched on the seat cushion, and it ripped open. He scratched the inside of the cushion and stuffing flew everywhere. *This is fun!* He thought to himself while he scratched the stuffing out of the couch cushions. He sat down and looked around the living room and wondered what could he play with next.

He jumped off the couch and headed to the hallway.

Later that day, Mike sat at his desk and looked depressed while he stared out the window.

Russ looked up from his paperwork and noticed Mike. “You okay Mike? Are you still upset with the meeting with OSHA this morning?”

“The kids hate me. Debbie's mad at me. That dog has completely ruined my life!”

“I don't know why, dogs bring joy to a

family. All of our dogs were just like one of the kids,” Russ replied.

“I’m sorry, but that’s just way too weird,” Mike replied while he continued to stare out his window.

“You don’t know what you’re missing.”

“I know what I’m missing. A good life without a stupid dog is what I’m missing,” Mike replied and silently cursed out Kenny for giving them Rascal.

Russ got irritated with Mike’s attitude. “I’m going to inspect some units,” he said then grabbed a pad of paper and got up from his desk and walked out of the trailer.

Mike continued to stare depressed out the trailer windows. He watched while Russ walked over to one of the units. He started to think about Russ’ comments and wondered that maybe he was correct.

It was later that evening and Mike arrived home before Debbie and the kids.

Mike entered the living room and his eyes widened in shock the second he saw the ripped couch cushions and cushion stuffing all over the floor.

“Debbie!” he called out and waited. The

house was quiet.

Mike walked down the hallway and headed to his bedroom. “Debbie,” he called out again. The house was quiet. He turned around and headed to the kitchen thinking they might be outside with the dog.

He took a quick glance at this playroom while he walked down the hallway. Then he stopped in his tracks when something felt weird. He ran back to his playroom and stepped inside.

He looked around his room then his eyes widened in shock when he saw his busted beloved guitar. He did a double take to make sure he was seeing correctly. He slowly walked over and picked up his broken guitar.

“My Les Paul!” he quietly said about ready to cry. “Someone broke my Les Paul!” while he looked at the broken headstock.

Out in the hallway, Rascal slowly walked out of the kitchen when he heard some noise. Rascal barked at the noise in Mike’s playroom.

Mike stepped out into the hallway and saw Rascal in the hallway.

Rascal sensed the danger the second he saw Mike and turned around and raced down the hallway toward the living room.

Mike ran furiously after him, as he knew

Rascal broke his guitar.

Rascal ran on the couch, and Mike ran after him.

Rascal ran to the end of the couch and across the side table. He knocked over Debbie's favorite lamp and it shattered on the floor.

He ran over and jumped on Mike's lazy boy chair.

"Get off my chair!" Mike yelled out.

Rascal jumped off the lazy boy chair and ran toward the 52-inch HDTV.

"Stay away from the TV!" Mike yelled and bolted after Rascal.

Rascal's paws went out from under him and he slid into the TV stand.

Just before Mike got to the TV, he slipped on a puddle made by Rascal just before he got home. Mike slid into the TV stand then fell on his butt.

The HDTV rocked and fell over. Mike saw it coming and quickly moved out of the way just in the nick of time while the TV crashed on the floor.

Mike was red faced furious while he stood up.

Rascal raced down the hallway.

Mike jumped up on his feet and ran after

Rascal.

He ran in the hallway and saw Rascal while he ran into the bathroom thinking that was a safe place.

Mike ran into the bathroom and slammed the bathroom door closed. He looked around and didn't see Rascal. He looked in the bathtub and there was Rascal.

Rascal shivered with fear while Mike reached down and grabbed him by the scruff of his neck.

Mike opened the bathroom door and walked Rascal down the hallway.

He walked Rascal through the living room and to the front door.

Mike went outside with Rascal in his grips.

Mike stormed Rascal across his front yard to his pickup truck while Debbie pulled her mini-van into the driveway.

Debbie, Jenny and Chris watched while Mike with Rascal by the scruff of his neck, stormed over to his pickup.

Debbie quickly got out of the mini-van along with Jenny and Chris.

“What are you doing?” Debbie yelled out

while she ran over to Mike.

Jenny and Chris ran over in a panic.

Louise walked Boodro down the sidewalk and stopped to watch the commotion at Mike's house.

“Daddy, what are you doing to Rascal?”

Jenny cried out upset.

“I've had it! Someone left him inside the house all day. How did that happen?” Mike asked while he glared at Jenny and Chris.

Jenny looked away guilty.

Chris shrugged his shoulder to indicate he did not have a clue.

Rascal looked so sad while he hung by the scruff of his neck.

“He broke my Les Paul. My four thousand dollar Les Paul is ruined. And I decided I'm not having our backyard look a redneck's yard, with a dog living out back,” he yelled out.

Mike opened up his pickup truck door and set Rascal inside. He got inside and slammed the door then started up his truck.

“I hate you daddy!” Jenny yelled out and started crying while she ran to the house.

“I hate you daddy!” Chris yelled out then he ran to the house after Jenny.

“What are you doing?” Debbie yelled at Mike.

Mike ignored her and backed his pickup down the driveway.

Debbie looked furious while Mike drove his pickup down the road.

Louise glared at Mike’s pickup while it drove down the street. Her hatred for him increased two-fold the second she saw Rascal looking so sad out the rear window. Then she got an evil thought and she rushed Boodro back to her house.

Debbie stormed to the front door.

She stepped inside her house.

She immediately saw the mess made in her living room and saw her couch.

“My couch!” she cried out, as it was her favorite couch.

Later that evening, Mike pulled his pickup off on the shoulder of a two-lane country road five miles south of town.

While Mike drove down this road, he passed by Howard and Ginger while they walked south along the side of the road. Mike was too pissed to notice them on the road.

“I sure hope I have better luck down south, my little doggie friend,” Howard spoke to Ginger and had always loved her company.

She looked up at him. “I hope I can find a family down south,” she said but knew he didn’t understand a word she barked out.

Howard and Ginger continued down that two-lane country road.

About a mile farther down the road, Mike pulled his pickup off the side of the road. He got out of his pickup and held Rascal by the scruff of his neck.

He dropped Rascal in the dirt.

“Git!” Mike yelled and kicked some dirt at him.

Rascal ran off with his tail between his legs.

Mike got back in his pickup and turned it around.

He headed back home down the country road.

Rascal stopped and whined while he saw Mike’s pickup drive away. He already missed Debbie, Jenny and Chris.

Rascal looked around the scary woods and shook with fear.

It was quiet in the middle of the night in New Castle except for the thunderstorm that was coming way off from the west.

Louise sat with Boodro on her porch. She used a pair of scissors and clipped off some of his hair. She dropped his hair it into a small bowl.

She went back inside her with a smirk on her face.

Twenty minutes later, Louise, dressed in a black shirt and black pants, entered her back porch with that bowl in hand. Inside the bowl was a greenish looking concoction she made.

She walked out of her porch with her cane and quietly rushed through her yard and rushed through Mike's backyard.

She walked over to Mike's back porch. She opened up the screen door and stepped inside Mike's back porch.

She waved her hand across the handle of the kitchen door and it magically unlocked.

She quietly opened the door and hesitated to make sure the coast was clear. It was safe so she stepped inside Mike's kitchen.

She walked through the kitchen and stood in the hallway. She started down the hallway, but stopped when she heard someone stir in the living room. She looked and smiled when she saw Mike asleep on the couch. He slept there because Debbie kicked him out of the bedroom and even talked about leaving him.

Louise quietly tiptoed into the living room and went up to the couch. She removed a small pair of scissors and set the bowl on the floor. She clipped off some of Mike's hair and dropped it into the bowl. The concoction inside the bowl fizzed the second his hair came in contact with the liquid.

Louise cautiously grabbed Mike's right hand and slowly moved it down to the floor. She set his fingers into the concoction where it also fizzed.

She waved her hand across the bowl where the liquid bubbled and turned to a bright yellow.

Mike's body twinged a little in pain while he slept with his fingers in the bowl.

She cautiously removed Mike's hand and placed it on his chest. She then removed a spoon from her back pocket and scooped up some of

the concoction out of the bowl. She cautiously poured the liquid into Mike's opened mouth. His body twinged a little in pain like he was having a nightmare.

He woke up and looked at Louise in a daze.

"Go back to sleep. You're having a dream," Louise whispered to Mike and snapped her fingers.

He fell fast asleep.

She tiptoed out of the living room with an evil smirk with the bowl in hand.

She tiptoed through the kitchen and out through the kitchen door.

She stepped out on the back porch and closed the kitchen door. She waved her hand across the handle and it locked.

She opened up the screen door and left the porch.

Louise rushed through Mike's backyard to her porch where thunder was louder while the storm was getting closer.

Ten minutes later, Louise was inside her den where all kinds of Voodoo items hung on the

wall.

There was a bookcase full of small bottles with cork tops, that contained strange looking liquids, and other Voodoo items and old books with potions.

Lit candles were in a circle around Louise on the floor. She dropped some more of cut Boodro's hair into another bowl with a bright lime green liquid. Her eyes rolled back in her head. She slowly waved her hand over the bowl and it ignited into a flame.

“May you wake up in one year living a dog's life,” she called out.

She looked at the bowl on fire with an evil smirk knowing her job was done.

Fifteen minutes later, Mike still slept on the couch. Then thunder and lightning was heard from outside. He tossed and turned on the couch. He started sweating and his face cringed indicating he was in pain.

After a few seconds of Mike crying out in pain, Debbie rushed into the living room.

Then the second she stepped foot into the living room, a bolt of lightning crashed through the window and came in contact with Mike.

She watched in horror while he glowed

for a few seconds.

Chapter 6

It was a year later in the backwoods of central Alabama.

It was another beautiful morning in March and the birds filled the air with a beautiful song.

Five miles in the country east of Sylacauga, Alabama was the five-acre home of Lester and Agnes Simpson.

Lester's backyard was a total shambles. It was filled with an old rusty Chevy S-10 pickup, Chevy Cavalier and a Chevy Chevette. There were also a few old toilets, washing machines, a boat trailer, a rusty barbeque, a broken jet ski on a trailer and other miscellaneous broken items.

In the center of the backyard was a pole with five dog chains attached to it to where they could move in a circle.

About twenty feet from the pole was a twelve foot wide, fourteen foot long and six foot high caged kennel under a tin roof with a concrete slab.

Inside the kennel were four ugly, unkempt dogs, named Brutus, Clyde, Tiger and Bubba. They were all pit bulls and all spoke with Alabama southern accents. Each of the dogs had big black leather collars with a nametag.

Then at the other end of the kennel was a smaller one-year-old Lhasa Apso puppy, named Peewee with long matted hair.

Brutus, Clyde, Tiger, Bubba and Peewee were all sound asleep. But Peewee tossed and turned in a little pain as something strange was going through his little body. In fact, Mike Hanson was in reality now becoming Peewee, as Louise's Voodoo potion and the bolt of lightning turned Mike into a dog.

Then at the other end of the backyard, a Rooster gave out a loud cock-a-doodle-do.

Peewee woke up at the sound of the rooster that filled the backyard. "Don't tell me that voodoo lady got a rooster. She probably uses it for rituals," Peewee said while he stood up and stretched like a dog.

He looked around looked baffled. "Why am I in a cage? Was Debbie that furious with me

that she put me in a cage?” he looked around in a little bit of a daze. Then his eyes widened in fear. “Oh my God! There's something wrong with my eyes! I'm color blind!” Peewee said while he sniffed the air. “Phew! It smells like a cesspool. Did that Voodoo lady let her dogs loose in my backyard again?” he said while he sniffed the air some more. It dawned on him when those smells filled his nose. “I can smell! How's that possible?” he said while he sniffed the air again. “Now I know why I was glad I lost my sense of smell. Yuck!” he said while he looked around the yard. “Wait, this isn't my backyard. I never had all this junk scattered around my yard. And that's not my house,” he said while he saw Lester's shabby two story wooden home. Peewee sniffed the air again. “Phew, somebody has a bad case of body odor!” he added.

Peewee looked around the kennel and saw the other four pit bull dogs sleeping on the concrete. He jumped back scared and slammed into the kennel fence. “Where did those dogs come from?” Peewee asked.

Bubba woke up, and looked over at Peewee. “Shut up, we're trying to get some shut eye,” he yelled out then placed his head back on

the concrete.

“Oh my God! It’s a talking dog!”

Peewee said in disbelief.

“Of course I talk, you dummy. That's what dogs do. They talk to each other,” Bubba said while he placed his head back the concrete and went back to sleep.

“Dogs? What did he mean by dogs?”

Peewee asked curiously then he looked down and saw his two front paws on the concrete slab. “What's with these paws?” he asked himself while he brought one paw to his mouth then sniffed it.

Peewee saw a shiny silver water dish at the other side of the kennel. He walked over to it and looked down. He saw his reflection that was the face of a Lhasa Apso dog with long matted hair. Peewee winked an eye. The dog in the reflection winked the same eye. Peewee stuck out his tongue. The dog in the reflection stuck out his tongue. Then it dawned on him. “I'm a dog?” Peewee cried out in a panic. Then his eyes widened when he figured something else out. “And I'm naked!” Peewee cried out then his eyes crossed and he fainted.

Later that morning, Peewee was still

passed out on the kennel floor. His eyes slowly opened and he looked around. "I hope this was just a nightmare," Peewee said while he got up on all four paws. He looked around and saw the kennel, the messy backyard, Elmer's house and he still saw everything in black and white. "Oh no! It's not a nightmare; I'm really a dog!" he cried out in a panic.

Brutus, Bubba, Tiger and Clyde all laughed at Peewee from the other end of the kennel.

"Of course you're a dog. What did you think, you're a cat?" Clyde said.

"Meow!" Bubba jokingly said while he imitated a cat.

Brutus and Bubba high-fived with their paws while Tiger and Clyde laughed.

Peewee's eyes widen in a panic then he quickly turned around, and saw Tiger at his backside.

"Why are you sniffing my butt?" Peewee yelled. "Stop that!"

Tiger walked past him. "That's what dogs do. They sniff each other," Tiger said while he walked back over to Bubba and Brutus.

"Gross!" Peewee called out while he backed his rear end to the kennel fence for

protection.

“Are you feeling okay, Peewee?” Bubba asked and walked over concerned.

“Oh great! My name is Peewee! What a stupid name!” Peewee said.

“What's wrong little buddy?” Brutus said concerned while he walked over.

“Listen, about this Peewee name. From now on, call me Mike,” Peewee said.

“Okay. Your name is Mike, if that makes you feel better,” Brutus said while he sat down by Mike.

Clyde, Tiger and Bubba both nodded in agreement and they sat down near Mike.

Mike looked sad then he paced around the kennel.

The other dogs watched.

“How is it possible I became a dog?” Mike asked while he paced around the kennel. Then it dawned on Mike. “That creepy Voodoo lady! She was in my house and put some kind of Voodoo spell on me!” Mike cried out while he frantically paced around the kennel.

The other dogs watched and thought Mike was loony.

Then the back screen door of the house squeaked opened. All the dogs looked and saw

Lester, a fifty year old potbellied, redneck with long dirty stringy hair and he wore nothing but dirty jean coveralls.

Lester walked over to the kennel with four dog dishes filled with cheap canned dog food in hand.

Lester slid the four dishes through an opening at the bottom of the kennel by the door. "Breakfast boys," Lester said.

Mike looked at Lester while he walked away toward his house. "Excuse me sir. But do you know a Louise LeBlanc?" Mike asked Lester.

Lester turned around and glared at Mike because all he heard was Mike barking. Lester got mad and stormed over and banged the kennel cage with his fist. "Shut up you stupid mutt!" he yelled at Mike.

Lester walked away toward his house.

"Sir. Please help me! I'm a human, I'm not a dog" Mike yelled out.

All Lester heard was Mike barking back at him and that got him mad. He picked up a brick in his yard and hurled it at the kennel.

It banged the cage six inches from Mike's head. Mike ran to the other side of the cage startled.

“Why is he mad with me? I'm only asking simple questions,” Mike asked a little concerned.

All the dogs laughed at Mike.

“You dummy! Humans can't hear us,” Clyde said.

“Yeah. We can understand them, but they only hear, woof, woof, bark, bark, when we talk,” Brutus said.

“Enough of this human stuff, let's eat, I'm starving,” Bubba said while he ran over to the food dishes.

Brutus, and Tiger and Clyde immediately munched down their food.

Mike walked over and looked at his bowl of that nasty brown stuff. “I'm supposed to eat this garbage?” he said while he stared at the food.

Brutus looked over at Mike. “What's wrong with you? You love this stuff,” Brutus replied with a mouthful of food.

Mike sniffed it. “Ewe! It stinks,” he said.

Mike took a small bite, the immediately spat it out. “That's awful!” he said then walked over to the other side of the kennel and sat down and looked so sad.

The other dogs glanced over at Mike.

“I think our little buddy is flipping out,” Clyde said while he gulped down the rest of his food.

The other dogs nodded in agreement while they munched on their food.

Mike's stomach growled in hunger. He tried to ignore it, and then it growled again. “Man, am I hungry,” Mike said while his stomach growled.

Mike looked at his dog dish at the other side of the kennel. “I can't believe I have to eat that stuff,” he said then his stomach growled and he couldn't stand it any longer.

He got up and walked back over to his food dish. Mike nibbled at the food, and he gagged. He nibbled some more and gagged a little. He nibbled some more then went for it all and took a huge bite and immediately swallowed.

It was later that afternoon and Brutus, Bubba, Tiger and Clyde were sound asleep.

Mike paced around the kennel pondering his dilemma. “This life stinks!” Mike repeatedly. said to himself while he paced around the kennel.

Mike saw Lester walk into the backyard.

He stuck his nose through the kennel fence. “Ah sir, excuse me. Can you let me out of here? I need to get home to my wife and kids,” Mike yelled out at Lester.

The other dogs woke up, and looked over at Mike.

“Sir, I don't belong in here. I have a nice house and I own a construction company,” Mike yelled at Lester.

All Lester heard was Mike barking and that got him mad. He rushed over and picked up an empty five-gallon plastic can and threw it at Mike.

The can smacked Mike on his nose while it banged into the fence. “Ouch!” Mike yelled out then stepped backwards.

The other dogs laughed hysterically.

“I have a home,” Bubba cried out while he laughed.

“I have a wife and kids,” Clyde cried out while he laughed.

“I own a construction company,” Tiger cried out while he laughed.

They all continued to laugh hysterically at Mike.

“Well I do!” Mike said then he lay on the kennel floor and looked depressed. He closed

his eyes and went to sleep.

It was later that afternoon and Mike woke up to find he was still a dog and got even more depressed.

Then Lester walked out of the back of his house and went over to the kennel. He opened the door.

“Come Brutus,” he said.

Brutus walked over and Lester grabbed him by his collar and waked him over to the pole with the chains. He connected his collar to one of the chains.

Lester walked back and did the same to the other four dogs.

A few minutes later, Brutus, Bubba, Clyde and Tiger all walked around and they each had fifty feet of freedom.

“I need to get back home!” Mike said while he sat down in the grass at the length of his fifty-foot chain. He saw the dirt driveway of Lester’s home and yearned to get back home.

Mike suddenly got a look of discomfort and he crossed his hind legs. “Not now!” cried out then looked at the other four dogs that stared at him. “Hey guys, can you turn around while I

go to the bathroom?”

“Turn around? Are you joking with us, Mike?” Tiger asked.

“I can't go in front of everybody,” Mike replied.

Bubba walked over to Mike. “Mike, I'm worried about you,” Bubba said with concerned eyes.

Brutus, Clyde and Tiger walked over.

“Yeah. Did Lester hit you on the head and scramble your brains?” Tiger asked with concerned eyes.

“Guys, I really need to get out of here. Can you please help me?” Mike responded with pleading eyes. “Please!”

The dogs couldn't resist Mike's pleading eyes.

“Okay Mike. We'll help,” Brutus said.

“Yeah, plus, we'll turn our backs so you can go to the bathroom,” Clyde said while looked at the other dogs who all nodded in agreement.

They turned their backs on Mike who squatted and strained while he went to the bathroom.

Thirty minutes later, Mike and the other

four dogs stared at Lester's back door while they waited for him to come outside.

"Does everybody remember what to do?" Brutus asked the others.

Bubba, Clyde and Tiger nodded their heads in agreement.

"I don't know how to thank you," Mike told them.

"Don't worry about it little buddy. That's what friends are for, helping each other out," Brutus replied.

"Are you sure you want to go?" Bubba asked.

"I have to. I don't belong here," Mike replied.

"But we have it made. We get two meals a day," Clyde said.

The back screen door of Lester's house opened up and he walked outside.

"It's show time," Tiger said while they watched Lester.

All five dogs just walked away from Lester while Mike walked closer to make sure he was the first one disconnected from the chain.

It worked, as Lester walked up to Mike and disconnected the chain from his collar. Then Clyde, Tiger, Brutus and Bubba raced over to

Lester and ran circles around him and wrapped their chains around his legs. “What are you doing?” Lester yelled at his dogs. Then the four dogs jumped up on Lester and he fell on his butt wrapped up in the chains.

Mike saw his opportunity and he bolted toward the dirt driveway.

Lester saw Mike run away.

He got up and tried to run after Mike, but the chains around his legs cause him to fall flat on his face bringing the four dogs down with him.

“Pee wee, get your butt back here!” Lester yelled out. Then he looked worried with the sight of Mike running away. “Agnes is going to be furious with me for losing her precious Pee wee.”

“It feels good to get away from those smelly boneheads!” Mike said while he ran down Lester’s dirt driveway.

Mike got to the two-lane country road and ran off without any clue with the direction he was headed.

Five minutes later, Mike stopped running and was out of breath. He looked back down the road and saw that the coast was clear.

“I don’t recognize this road being near New Castle,” Mike said while he walked away down the road.

After ten minutes of walking, he saw the Alabama Highway 148 sign along the road. He stopped and looked at the sign in disbelief. “I’m in Alabama? Oh that’s just great. It’ll take me forever to walk home,” he said then continued to walk down the road.

Twenty-two minutes later, Mike slowed down while he walked down the road.

A pickup truck with four teenage boys in the bed raced after Mike.

Mike stepped off to the small shoulder just as one of the teenagers threw a soda can, and it smacked Mike's hindquarters. “Ouch!” he yelled out in pain.

He saw the teenagers laugh at him while the pickup truck raced off down the road.

“That’s not funny!” Mike yelled at the kids. He then saw a rock and tried to pick it up with a paw. He couldn’t pick up the rocks with his paw. “These paws are useless,” he said while he looked at it. Then Mike recalled him throwing a beer bottle at a stray dog ten years

ago. "I guess that was payback," he said while he stepped back on the road and continued walking.

Mike walked down the road, and moved to the shoulder while an occasional car drove by.

Mike walked for another thirty minutes and he was exhausted.

He walked off the road and into the woods.

He stopped and sat down in the dirt. He yawned and lay in the dirt. He closed his eyes, and was soon fast asleep.

Sixteen minutes later, Mike had a dream where he remembered the family trip down to Orlando, Florida and they visited Sea World.

After hours of visiting all the exhibits, they went on the Journey to Atlantis ride. They had a blast then they reached the bottom and were splashed by water.

Mike woke from his dream and felt more water drops and he thought he was back on the ride at Sea World. He heard thunder, and then it poured. Mike realized he was back in Alabama and was still a dog alone in the woods. He was

soaked to the bones within a few minutes.

Rain, lightning and thunder filled the air.

He was scared and shook from being cold.

Chapter 7

The morning's rays from the sun peaked through the trees and the birds sang in the start of another day.

Mike woke up and looked around the woods. He got up on his paws, and his stomach growled. "I would love some scrambled eggs, bacon and a huge cup of coffee," Mike said while he stretched.

He walked out of the woods.

He headed down the road with his head hung down and was depressed. His stomach continued to growl while he moped down the road.

A couple of hours later and traffic on the road increased. Cars would drive by and blow their horns while they passed by Mike. He was too tired to get startled or step off the road.

Then twenty minutes later, Mike walked into the outskirts of Sylacauga, Alabama.

Mike walked down numerous streets

while he pondered how he was going to get back up to Pennsylvania.

“I don’t have a map,” he said to himself while he turned down another street.

After Mike walked farther down this street, he stopped when he smelled something good. “Hamburgers! That’s the smells I missed,” he said while he wagged his tail for the first time since he realized he was a dog.

He soon walked upon a fast food hamburger restaurant called *Fantastic Burgers* and stopped when he smelled hamburgers. His stomach growled with hunger while he looked at the outdoor café style tables out front where a couple of people sat and ate their meals.

“I could kill for a hamburger!” Mike said while his stomach growled.

He walked down the driveway into the burger place.

He walked into the area with the outdoor tables.

He walked over to a table where a young man and woman ate their juicy hamburgers. His stomach growled again and was louder.

“Could you please spare a piece of hamburger? I’m starving,” Mike said.

The man heard Mike barking at him and

he got mad. He crumpled up the bag from the hamburgers. “Get away you mangy mutt!” the man yelled at Mike while he threw the bag at him.

Mike just sat there while it bounced off his head.

The man got up and ran after Mike who suddenly realized this man didn’t appreciate dogs.

Mike ran to the back of the restaurant.

He sat down by the row of hedges at the rear of the restaurant property.

His stomach growled louder while he sat by the hedges.

“Are you hungry?” a female’s voice called out from behind the hedges a few seconds later.

Mike looked around to see where that voice came from.

“I said, are you hungry?” the voice said again then Ginger, the dog Mike previously treated poorly back home, walked out from behind the hedges.

“Starving!” he replied the second he saw Ginger.

“My name is Ginger,” she said while she walked up to him.

“My name is Mike,” he replied.

Mike stared at Ginger and something about her seemed extremely familiar. “Where have I seen you before?” he asked while he looked Ginger over.

Ginger looked at Mike. “I’ve never met you,” she said then walked over and sniffed him, which made Mike a tad nervous.

“Or smelled you before,” she said then stepped away from him.

“I have this feeling we’ve met before,” Mike said.

“Maybe there’s another dog that looks like me out there,” she said then sat down next to Mike.

His stomach growled while he stared at the restaurant and his tongue hung out of his mouth.

“I’m also hungry. Why don’t we get something to eat,” she offered.

“How? I don’t have any money,” he replied with sad eyes wondering if he would starve to death.

Ginger chuckled. “Money? People use money, we use our speed and wits,” she said while she looked at the restaurant.

“Speed and wits? How?” he asked

curiously.

Ginger looked at Mike. "I take it you're not from the streets. Maybe you're a house dog? Or maybe you're from an outside kennel?"

"Born and raised in a house," he answered while his stomach continued to growl.

"Watch and learn my new found friend," she said while she got up then walked away.

Mike got up and curiously followed.

Mike followed Ginger while she walked to the garbage dumpster where it overflowed and a couple of trash bags were on the ground.

Mike watched while Ginger ripped the bag open with her nails.

"Ewe gross!" he said while Ginger dug into the trash bag for some food.

"What's the matter?" she asked while she continued to dig through the trash.

"You're eating out of the trash?" he said in disgust.

"Who cares? I'm hungry and trash is an excellent source of food," she replied while she dug through the trash and found a hamburger that was made yesterday and wasn't sold. She ripped open the wrapping and bit into it.

"Mmmm! This tastes so good!" she said with a mouthful of burger.

Mike sniffed the air. "Something smells better like a freshly made hamburger," he said while the aroma of charcoal burgers being cooked on the grill came from the opened back door.

"Hamburger has been one of my favorites," she said while she munched down on some more of the day old burger.

"Nothing better than a burger off the grill," Mike said while his stomach growled.

"You better start liking trash food or you're going to starve," Ginger said then she took another bite of burger.

Mike's empty stomach was too hard to resist. He swallowed his pride and walked over to the trash bag. He looked inside the hole she made and dug around with his paw. He found another day old burger wrapped up.

"I can't starve," he said and figured it would be okay since it's wrapped up. He dug at the wrapping and the burger on the bun was exposed. He dove in and took a bite. "Mmmm!" he said while he ate the burger and it made his tummy happy.

It was later that day and after they each ate three hamburgers, and lay by the hedges of

the restaurant.

“That sure filled my stomach. Thanks,” Mike said to Ginger then he sat up and looked at her. “How long have you been on the streets?”

Ginger sat up. “Pretty much my whole life. My mother gave birth to me and my brother and sisters at these humans house. The humans gave away my brothers and sisters but couldn't find me a home. So they left me out in the woods one afternoon saying I was too much of a burden. What kind of mean person does such a horrible thing?” she asked Mike while her eyes welled up when she recalled that horrible day.

“I wouldn't know,” Mike replied and then felt bad for leaving Rascal out in the woods, but wasn't about to tell Ginger.

“How long have you been on the streets?” she asked curiously.

“One day.”

“What happened?” she asked

“It's a long story and I don't feel like talking about it,” Mike replied with sad eyes.

“I've been on the open road, traveling from Florida all the way up to Pennsylvania, then back down to Florida,” she said.

Mike's ears perked up and his tail wagged. “Pennsylvania? That's where I'm from.

I need to get back there and be with my family,” he told her.

Ginger thought for a second. “If you’re from Pennsylvania, how did you make it down to Alabama?” she asked curiously.

Mike thought for a few seconds for a cover story. “Well, my family drove down to Orlando, Florida for vacation and to visit a relative in Alabama. They stopped for a break at a rest stop. They left me inside the car while they went to eat in a restaurant. I had to pee so bad that I crawled out an opened window. I ran to some trees and when I came back, they were gone. I guess they didn’t realize I wasn’t in the car,” Mike said then gave her some fake sad eyes.

Ginger felt sorry for him.

“I really need to get back to Pennsylvania,” he added.

“What town?” she asked curiously.

“New Castle.”

Her eyes lit up. “I know that place. The last time I was there, a dog pound guy caught me while I was on the streets. Then at the shelter, they almost put me to sleep forever, but I was too crafty and slipped away. So I’m not sure I want to head back to that city,” she said then

looked at Mike's sad eyes. She thought about his sad eyes for a few seconds. "You know, you are kinda cute in an ugly way. Since you're not familiar with the streets, it'll be my pleasure to take you back home. I normally head up that way for the summers and spent the winters down in Florida. I was planning on going to Ohio this time, but I guess I can head back to New Castle," she said then gave Mike a lick across the side of his head.

Gross! A dog kissed me! Mike thought to himself and didn't want to say that out loud, as he didn't want to get her mad. "I would love the company," he told her and knew his life depended on Ginger.

"Super! We will have a good time and I would love some company. After I drop you off at your home, I'm heading to Ohio," she replied.

Then one of the short order cooks stepped out of the back door of the restaurant. He sat down to relax and drink a Coke then he saw Ginger and Mike. He frowned at the sight of the dogs. He picked up a rock by the back door. "Get out of here!" he yelled while he threw the rock at Ginger and Mike.

The rock landed inches by Mike and he jumped up startled.

“Welcome to life on the road,” Ginger said while she turned around and bolted through the hedges.

Mike turned around and bolted after her through the hedges.

Ten minutes, Ginger and Mike huffed and puffed while they ran down the sidewalk.

Mike stopped and sat down.

People walked around him.

Ginger walked back to Mike. “Are you okay?” she asked concerned.

“I need a rest. I’m not use to running like that,” he said out of breath.

“House dogs are being way too pampered,” she said while she sat down next to Mike. Then she looked down at the sidewalk. “I would love to be pampered,” she quietly to herself.

Mike heard her comment and felt a little sorry for her.

Then Ginger’s eyes widen in fear when she saw the city dog pound truck.

“We better get out of here really fast,” she told him while she kept an eye on the truck.

“What’s wrong?” he asked while he looked in the direction she looked.

“Dog pound truck,” she said then jumped up and bolted down the sidewalk.

Mike jumped up and bolted after Ginger. She quickly turned down another sidewalk.

“If they catch us, they’ll put us in the pound where we stand a good chance of being put to sleep forever,” she called out while she ran as fast as she could down the sidewalk.

“How do you know this?” Mike asked out of breath while he ran up to her.

“My experience up in New Castle,” she said while she looked behind her for the truck, and saw it driving down the street after them.

“Oh yeah,” he replied when he remembered her story.

They ran between some people’s legs almost causing them to fall on their butts.

Ginger saw a residential area up ahead down the sidewalk.

A few minutes later, she made a sharp right turn and ran through someone’s backyard.

Mike made a sharp right turn and ran after her.

The male driver of the dog pound truck

stopped and got out and stood in the street. He looked at the yard where he saw Ginger and Mike run through, and they were nowhere in sight.

He looked disappointed while he got back into his truck and slowly drove down the street in search of the two dogs.

The dog pound truck made a right turn down the residential street. He slowly drove down that street in search of the two dogs.

A few minutes later, Ginger and Mike poked their heads out of a bush they ducked under to hide.

“The coast is clear,” she told Mike and got out from under the bush.

Mike came out from under the bush.

They walked back down to the street.

They walked down the sidewalk to another main street.

Ginger stopped and looked around the area. “We need to cross the street so we can head north,” she said.

Mike looked around and looked lost. “How do you know that?” he asked, as he was lost.

“This is my normal path to the north,” she said.

“Well, let’s cross the street,” Mike said and got up and walked to the curb.

He set one paw on the street and Ginger immediately chomped down on his tail and pulled him back.

“Ahhhh!” Mike cried out in pain. “What are you doing?” he said the second a car whizzed past him and the wheels missed him by inches.

“The streets are jam packed with danger. You could get hurt if you don’t look for cars,” she scolded him.

Mike was shaken up knowing a car tire almost flattened his head. He sat down on the sidewalk. “Thank you,” he said.

“Just be careful, as I don’t want to lose you,” she said then licked the inside of his ear and snuggled next to him.

“I hope in doggie land, this doesn't mean we're married,” Mike quietly said to himself.

Some people walked by and smiled at the sight of two dogs snuggling together.

“Let’s go before that pound truck comes this way,” she said then got up.

She walked to the curb and looked both ways. The coast was clear. “Now,” she said then she bolted across the street.

Mike got up and he got to the curb. He

cautiously looked both ways then he bolted across the street.

Later that evening and the sun sunk fast below the horizon.

Mike and Ginger finally walked to Highway 280, which was north of Sylacauga.

“You see, eating out of the trash isn’t a bad way to dine,” Ginger told him after they had dinner at the dumpster behind McDonalds.

They were only one mile north of the Merkel Field airport of Sylacauga when Mike stopped and stepped off the road.

“What’s wrong?” she asked while she walked back to him.

“I’m not use to all this walking and I’m exhausted,” he said.

She looked up at the sky. “It’s getting dark, so we might as well sleep in these woods,” she said then walked off into the woods.

Mike followed her.

A few minutes later, they found a spot twenty feet from the road.

Mike curled up and closed his eyes. He was asleep in minutes.

Ginger curled up next to him and she

closed her eyes, and she was asleep in minutes.

An hour later, Mike woke up. He felt something on his back. It took a few seconds for him to realize that Ginger rested her head on his back. “Again, I hope in doggie land this doesn’t mean we’re engaged,” he quietly said to himself.

Ginger opened her eyes. “No. We’re just friends. You’re not my type anyway. Sleeping like this will help keep us warm tonight,” she said then closed her eyes.

Mike felt a little embarrassed. He closed his eyes.

Chapter 8

It was another morning in Alabama.

Ginger woke up and saw Mike was still asleep. She got up and licked Mike's face.

"That feels so good Debbie," Mike moaned in his sleep while he dreamt about his wife.

Ginger got a little jealous and nudged Mike. "Wake up," she yelled out in his ear.

Mike jumped up scared and ran five feet away from Ginger. He looked around in a daze and it took a few seconds for it all to come back to him. He looked at Ginger. "Why did you do that?" he asked a little upset.

"I'm sorry. I tried to wake you, but you didn't move," she replied then she looked at him. "You were talking in your sleep. Who is this Debbie person? Is she another dog from up there in Pennsylvania?" she curiously asked being a little jealous.

"She's my," Mike replied then he stopped before he said the wrong word. "She's my owner," he added.

Ginger walked over and stared in Mike's eyes for a few seconds then she believed him. "Okay. We better hit the road," she said then walked away toward the road.

Mike got up and followed her to the road.

After a long and exhausting hour of walking on the hard asphalt, Mike stepped off the road and sat down in the dirt.

"What's wrong?" Ginger asked while she stepped off the road and sat down next to him.

"I'm tired and my paws are killing me," Mike said in a tired tone.

"I take it you're use to walking green horn?" she replied.

"I guess you can say that. I always rode in a pickup or a mini-van," he said while he remembered those days.

"I had many friends killed by those dangerous things. But you sure can get around quicker with them," she said a little sad remembering old friends from her past. "But I do remember when I was a puppy riding in my owners car, the window was down, and I stuck my head outside. The wind blowing through my face felt so good," Ginger said with happy eyes remembering that day. "Then a few weeks later,

I took another ride and they dumped me off in the woods,” Ginger added and growled while she thought about her owners.

“I’m sorry to hear about that,” Mike replied then looked at the road. “Well, we better get moving or we’ll never get back to Pennsylvania.

They walked off down the road.

Ginger looked curiously at Mike. “Are you sure your owners will take you back?” she asked.

“Of course. The kids are named Jenny and Chris and they love me,” Mike said.

“I just want to make sure,” Ginger replied but she really wanted to pal around with Mike for a longer time.

They walked for another hour and their tongues hung out from being hot.

“I’m thirsty,” Mike said.

“Me too,” Ginger replied while she looked around. She spotted a puddle from last night’s storm in this area.

She walked over to the puddle and slurped up some water.

Mike got grossed out while he watched her drink from the puddle.

She looked over at him. “Come get a drink,” she called out.

“I can’t drink from a puddle. That’s gross!” he replied.

“Die of thirst if you want,” she said then after she took a few more slurps from the puddle, she walked back to Mike.

They headed down the road.

Fifteen minutes down the road and Mike was parched. They walked by another puddle along the side of the road and he couldn’t stand it any longer.

He ran over to the puddle and immediately started slurping up.

Ginger watched from the road and knew he couldn’t hold out forever.

“Feel better?” she asked while he walked back to the road with his chin dripping with water.

“Much,” he replied while they walked down the road.

Ginger and Mike walked the rest of the day and the sun started to fall below the horizon and darkness was creeping upon them.

Mike sat down on the road. “I can’t go

any farther,” he said then gave out a big yawn.

Then Ginger’s ears perked up. “You better get off the road now,” she said.

“Why?” he asked in a sleepy stupor.

“Because that motorcycle will cream you,” she said while she quickly stepped off the road and ran to a tree a few feet away.

Mike looked and saw a headlight racing at him. Then he heard the whaaaaa sound of a Kawasaki motorcycle that got louder and louder. Mike quickly stepped off the road and ran to Ginger while the Kawasaki motorcycle whizzed by them.

“We better bed down for the night,” Ginger said while she looked around the area and then her eyes widened. “I know of a place a little farther down the road. We can stay there if you can muster up a little more energy,” she said.

“Okay,” Mike replied with a yawn.

They both got back on the road and walked away.

Fifteen minutes later, Ginger stopped when she spotted a small foot trail that led deep into the woods on the other side of the road.

“Here we are,” she said then looked up and down the road. There were no cars in sight

so she ran across the road.

Mike ran after her.

Ginger and Mike walked down the woods and it was getting darker and darker in the sky.

“Why are we going this far?” Mike said while other critter noises started to scare him.

Ginger waited a few seconds to respond. “We’re almost there,” she said after they heard some voices off to their right.

They walked down a smaller foot trail to their right and the farther they got down that trail the voices got louder and louder.

They soon walked into a small clearing where some other stray dogs were camped.

“What is this place?” Mike asked Ginger.

“It’s a camp we use while traveling. A place where we can hang and have some company before we move onward. We call it our Bama Camp,” she replied.

Rufus was a black Labrador who jumped up the second he spotted Ginger. “It’s Ginger!” he yelled out while he ran over to her.

“Rufus, long time no see,” she yelled back at him.

“Hello Ginger,” a Dachshund mix breed named Tiny called out.

“Ginger!” another mutt called out.

Soon the rest of the dogs called out a greeting for Ginger.

Rufus licked Ginger's face.

"So good to see you again," she replied then looked at Mike. "Hey everybody, this here is Mike," she introduced him.

"Any friend of Ginger's is a friend of ours," Rufus said then while he walked up to Mike.

Then Rufus walked up behind Mike and immediately sniffed his backside.

"Not the butt sniffing stuff again," Mike quietly said while he slowly sat his butt down in the dirt.

Then Ginger saw a German Shepherd named Hans, a Golden Retriever named Ralphie, two other hound dog mutts named Abby and Dexter.

They all stood around a Collie mix named Toby on his side in the dirt.

"What's wrong with Toby?" she asked Rufus and looked concerned.

"Some human hit him with a pickup truck down the road a bit," Rufus replied and looked worried.

"I don't think he's going make it," Dexter said while he looked down at Toby who closed

his eyes.

Abby felt Toby's neck with one of her paws. "He's gone," she said.

All the other dogs walked over and gathered around and looked down at Toby.

Mike walked over and joined everybody.

"We better bury him," Rufus told everybody.

Mike watched while five dogs walked three feet over and started digging a hole with their paws.

Thirty minutes later, Ginger and the rest of the dogs sat around the mound of dirt that was Toby's grave.

"Toby was a good friend and one that needs a good home up in heaven," Rufus said while his eyes welled up.

The eyes of Ginger and the other dogs welled up and then they all nodded in agreement with Rufus.

The dogs and Ginger sadly walked away his grave.

Mike walked over, and looked at the grave. He looked back at the other dogs that sat around with tears in their eyes. For once in his life, he felt sorry for these animals.

Then half of the dogs lay down in the dirt and closed their eyes.

Then the rest of the dogs along with Ginger joined them.

Mike lay down and closed his eyes.

They were all soon asleep.

Hours later and the dogs all woke up and milled around for a few minutes.

Misty's stomach growled.

Dexter's stomach growled.

Tiny's stomach growled.

Abby's stomach growled.

Then the stomachs of the rest of the dogs growled and it sounded like an orchestra.

"Can I have your attention?" Rufus called out to all the dogs.

All the dogs looked over at Rufus.

"By the sounds I just heard, I think it's time we go get some grub," Rufus said.

Everybody wagged their tails in anticipation of some food.

"Let's go," he said the walked over to the other side of the clearing where there was a smaller foot trail.

Everybody followed Rufus down the trail.

“Where are we going?” Mike asked Ginger while she walked by his side.

“A place where we normally find food this time of the day. It’s one of the reasons we camp out back there,” she replied.

Ten minutes later, they walked into a campsite that was dark where twelve people were camped in tents.

Rufus ran up to a trash can on a stand. He jumped up and the can swiveled downward and all the contents dumped on the ground.

Tiny, Abby and Dexter ran over and joined Rufus and they scoured through the trash for some food.

Hans did the same thing to another trash can. Ralphie and Ginger ran over and joined Hans while he scoured through the trash.

“Hurry up before you lose out,” Ginger told Mike who sat nearby them and looked sick.

“I’ll never get use to this,” Mike said while he walked over and started to pick through the trash.

Thirty minutes later, all the dogs were back to their Bama Camp in the clearing.

“Ah, that was delicious,” Rufus said with

happy eyes while he lay on the ground.

“You got that right,” Dexter replied while he lay on the ground.

All the other dogs nodded in agreement while they lay on the ground.

Mike tried to forget that he ate trash again so he would not vomit. He lay on the ground and closed his eyes.

Ginger walked over and lay next to Mike.

A few minutes later, and all the dogs were sound asleep.

Chapter 9

It was another morning in Alabama and the birds sang out a beautiful song from the trees.

One by one, the dogs in Bama Camp started to wake up once the sun's rays peeked through the trees.

Mike woke up and saw Tiny and Hans squatting over in the woods going to the bathroom. "I will never get use to that. Never" he said then the urge overcame him. "Ah man," he said while he got up.

He rushed over to a bush and got behind it for some privacy. He went to the bathroom and walked back into the camp where the rest of the dogs were now awake.

"There you are," Ginger said while she rushed up to Mike.

Mike yawned. "Man, I sure could use a cup of coffee," he said.

"Coffee? What's that?" Ginger asked.

"Oh, just something humans need to get their morning started," he replied.

"Oh," she responded.

“Ginger, where are you heading?” Rufus asked while he walked up to them.

“We’re going up to Pennsylvania to a town called New Castle,” she replied.

“What’s up there?” he replied.

“My owners,” Mike replied.

“Mike was accidently left in Alabama by his owner. He wants go back home,” Ginger added.

Rufus looked sad. “My owners left me outside Atlanta at a rest stop. I tried going back home, but saw they got a new dog to replace me. So it’s life on the streets for me,” Rufus said while his eyes welled up.

“Where are you headed?” Ginger asked Rufus.

“Hans, Ralphie, Dexter and Abby are heading up to the mountains in North Carolina. We’ve never been up there before and will stay to see the leaves change. Then we’ll head back down to Florida,” Rufus told her.

“Well, have a safe trip,” Ginger said.

“You two my darling,” Rufus said then leaned down and licked Ginger’s face.

Ginger giggled. “I never get tired of your kisses, Rufus,” he said.

“Come with us to North Carolina then,”

Rufus said then licked her face again.

Ginger thought about his offer and it was tempting but she looked at Mike and new he would never survive on the streets alone.

“Maybe next year. I promised Mike I want to help him get back home,” she replied.

“Oh well,” Rufus said then looked at Mike. “Well my new found friend, I hope you get back home and take of Ginger for me. She’s one sweet lady,” Rufus said.

“I will,” Mike responded.

“Good, now have a safe trip,” Rufus said then walked away disappointed Ginger didn’t want to join him.

“Bye everybody!” Ginger yelled out at the rest of the dogs.

“Later, Ginger!” Hans replied.

“Have a safe trip,” Tiny replied.

“See you later,” Ralphie replied.

All of the dogs said their good-byes.

Later that day, Ginger and Mike trekked down the road and headed toward Birmingham.

Soon they walked upon the town of Lake Purdy, which was located southeast of Birmingham.

“I’m starving,” Mike told Ginger while

they walked down a side street.

Ginger stopped and sniffed the air. “I’m smelling another familiar smell,” she replied.

She took off running down the sidewalk.

Mike ran after her.

Ginger turned down a street to the right and ran down the sidewalk.

After a few minutes they found another *Fantastic Burgers* joint.

Ginger led Mike back toward the rear of the restaurant and passed by the outside café area where a large man walked inside the restaurant.

At the rear of the restaurant, Ginger and Mike got there while the garbage truck emptied the dumpster.

“Rats,” she said while her stomach growled while she watched the truck drive away with their lunch.

“Well, I guess we’ll have to resort to another means,” she told Mike.

“What means?” Mike replied not sure he would like her plan.

Ginger moved in closer to Mike’s ear and whispered her plan.

Mike looked unsure but agreed since his stomach growled.

Ginger and Mike snuck around to the

corner of the outside café area and waited for a customer.

That large man walked out of the restaurant and headed to the outside café area with a large bag in hand.

Ginger's eyes lit up when she saw him. "This could be the jackpot. Are you ready?" Ginger asked Mike.

"You bet," he replied while his stomach growled.

"Let's move," she said then she bolted off to the large man the second he sat down on the concrete bench with tile inlays.

She jumped up on the bench next to the man then quickly jumped up on the table.

The large man saw Ginger on his table near his food and got mad. "Get away you ugly mutt!" he yelled and shooed her away.

"Could you please give us some food?" Ginger asked the man.

All the large man heard was Ginger barking at him on the table. He jumped up and went after her.

Ginger jumped down to the bench. "Please give us some food," she said to the man.

All the man heard was Ginger barking, so he lunged after Ginger. She jumped off the

bench and looked up at him from the ground.

“I’m starving!” she said.

All he heard was her barking and that made him mad. He ran after her.

She ran away.

Mike sprang into action and jumped up on the bench then jumped up on the top of the table. He quickly grabbed the bag and jumped down off the table and down to the bench. He jumped off the bench to the ground.

While Mike ran to the back of the restaurant, the large man chased Ginger to the street.

Mike ran to the rear of the restaurant and hid behind the dumpster.

The large man chased Ginger down the sidewalk and when he felt she wouldn’t return, he turned around and headed back to the restaurant.

The large man returned to his table. He looked mad when he saw that his bag of burgers was gone. He looked under the table, and it was not there. He looked around the area and it was not there.

He ran to the rear of the restaurant thinking some kids stole his lunch and were there munching down on his burgers. He looked

around the rear of the restaurant and nobody was in sight.

The man walked pissed back to the entrance and went back inside to buy another lunch.

Ginger snuck down through the drive-thru lane to the rear of the restaurant. She went behind the dumpster.

Mike sat there with the bag behind the dumpster.

“I’m surprised you didn’t start eating,” she said while she sat down.

“That wouldn’t be good manners,” he replied.

“A gentleman, I like that,” she replied then sniffed the bag. “Let’s eat,” she replied.

They both tore the bag opened and each immediately ripped opened their wrapped hamburgers. They munched down on the fresh juicy hamburgers.

Twenty minutes after they rested from their meal, Ginger walked out from behind the dumpster.

She looked around. “We need to get to Pennsylvania a little quicker,” she said.

“How? By running?” Mike asked.

“No, watch and learn,” she replied then walked away and headed toward the drive-thru lane.

Ginger and Mike sat by the entrance of the drive-thru lane.

“What are we waiting for? A taxi?” Mike asked jokingly.

“Patience my friend,” she replied.

A Dodge Ram pick-up truck drove in the drive-thru and passed them and she saw it had a Kentucky license plate under the down tailgate.

“This one will work,” she said.

“What will work?” Mike looked around a little baffled.

“That pickup will get us to Kentucky,” she replied.

Mike looked and saw the license plate. “Good thinking,” he replied happy to get off his paws for a while.

Ginger raced to the pickup where she jumped on the tailgate and quickly got on her belly. She saw Mike who just sat there looking a little nervous.

“Come on Mike,” she called out.

Mike got up and ran over to the pickup. He jumped up and smacked his head on the bottom of the tailgate. He dropped to the ground

in a little pain.

“Way to go Grace!” Ginger teased him.

“Sorry, I don't know how to jump that high,” he said while he got up.

“You're kidding me?” Ginger replied while she jumped down off the tailgate. “It looks I have some more things to teach you,” she said while she walked down the drive-thru lane and headed to the street.

Mike followed her to the street.

“Are you sure you're a dog?” she asked Mike while they ran down the street.

“No comment,” Mike replied.

Ginger ran over to a convenience store. She walked around the rear of the store and saw numerous stacked boxes.

Ginger jumped up on a small box then jumped off. “It's that easy,” she said.

Mike got a running start and he jumped on the box.

“See, it's easy,” she replied while she looked the area over and saw some other boxes stacked on top of each other. “I want you to jump on this boxes,” she said.

Mike walked away then took a running start. He jumped up and landed on top of the box.

“Good, now I want you to jump clear of the boxes and land on the other side,” she ordered.

Mike ran away from the boxes then got a running start and raced toward the boxes. He jumped and cleared the top of the stacked boxes. He felt proud of himself when he landed on his paws.

“Great grasshopper, you've graduated from Ginger's jump school. Let's hitch a ride up north,” she said then ran toward the street.

Mike ran after her and headed to the street.

Mike and Ginger ran back to the *Fantastic Burgers* and sat by the entrance to the drive-thru window. They watched for pickups with out of state plates.

An hour passed and they still waited.

Then a Chevy Silverado pickup truck with its tailgate down with Tennessee tags pulled into the drive-thru lane.

“Tennessee will get us closer and save a few days of walking,” Ginger replied then she bolted off after the pickup.

Mike ran after her and headed to the

pick up.

Ginger jumped up and landed on the tailgate.

Mike jumped up and landed on the tailgate.

“Good job!” Ginger praised him.

“Get off my truck!” a voice yelled behind them.

Ginger and Mike turned around, and saw a huge Mastiff standing at the front of the bed. The Mastiff growled while he inched toward Ginger and Mike.

“I said, get off my truck!” the Mastiff snarled at them while he inched his way closer to them.

Ginger knew they were in danger. “We’re sorry,” she said then jumped off the tailgate.

Mike stood on the tailgate frozen with fear.

“You better get off,” Ginger yelled at Mike.

The Mastiff inched his way closer. Mike snapped to reality and jumped off the tailgate.

The Mastiff walked to the edge of the tailgate. “And stay off!” he snarled at them then walked back and lay down on the bed under the

cab windows.

The Chevy pickup drove way and the driver submitted his order through the drive-through window.

Ginger and Mike walked back and sat down by the entrance to the drive-thru. They waited for some more vehicles.

“That also happens once in a while,” she told him.

“That sure takes the fun out of living on the streets,” he replied.”

“Tell me about it, she replied while they watched the incoming vehicles.

Three hours had passed and their chances of a free ride looked slimmer.

Then a Ford F150 pickup with a bunch of antique furniture in the bed pulled into drive-thru lane. On the door was painted Jimmy’s Antiques, Charleston, West Virginia.

Ginger saw the West Virginia license plate. “Now that will get us closer to Pennsylvania,” she replied then ran after the pickup.

She jumped up on the tailgate of the pickup.

Mike ran after her then he jumped on the

tailgate.

Ginger looked and found a cubbyhole between two pieces of furniture. “We better stay out of view,” she said then crawled inside the hole.

Mike looked around the furniture for another cubbyhole. He found one and crawled inside the hole.

Ginger and Mike hid in the cubbyholes while Jimmy a sixty-two-year-old antique furniture restorer bought a bacon cheeseburger, fries, and vanilla shake from the drive-thru window.

An hour later, Jimmy drove his pickup north of Birmingham on Interstate 59.

Ginger and Mike poked their heads out of the cubbyholes and watched while the pickup drove down the Interstate.

“This sure beats walking the asphalt,” Mike called out.

“You know it,” Ginger replied.

They continued to watch the north Alabama countryside drive by.

Hours later and the sun fell below the horizon to the west.

Ginger and Mike sat on the tailgate and watched the Tennessee countryside drive by while Jimmy drove his pickup truck north on Interstate 75.

Then an hour later, they watched while Jimmy drove his pickup down exit 383 on Interstate 75 in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Jimmy drove his truck to a Super 8 Motel and pulled into the parking lot.

He parked his pickup, and got out with a small suitcase.

Ginger and Mike poked their heads out of their cubbyholes and watched while Jimmy walked with his small suitcase in hand to the front entrance.

“Looks like he’s spending the night here,” Mike said.

Ginger got out of her cubbyhole and sat on the tailgate.

Mike got out of his cubbyhole and sat on the tailgate next to her.

They both sniffed the air.

“Something smells good,” Mike said happy to have his sense of smell back.

“There must be a restaurant over in that direction,” she said while she looked in the

direction of the smell. "I'll race you to dinner," she said then jumped off the tailgate.

She ran through the parking lot.

Mike jumped off the tailgate and ran after Ginger.

An hour later, Ginger and Mike walked back through the Super Motel 8 motel after eating out of the garbage from the nearby Waffle House restaurant.

"I don't know if I'll ever get use to eating out of garbage cans," Mike said.

"Some of us don't have the luxury of having a human give us food everyday," Ginger replied while they walked back to Jimmy's pickup.

Ginger and Mike jumped on the tailgate of the pickup and sat down. They stared up at the stars and the full Moon.

After a few minutes, they saw a shooting star zoom across the sky.

"Shooting star, hurry up and make a wish," she told him then quickly closed her eyes.

Mike closed their eyes.

"I wish I could have a human family love me and take me off the streets," Ginger wished silently in her head.

“I wish I could get my human life back and take care of my family,” Mike wished silently in his head.

They both opened their eyes then Ginger and Mike yawned.

“It's been a long day,” Mike said.

“Let's rest up for tomorrow's journey,” she said then crawled back into her cubbyhole.

Mike crawled back into his cubbyhole, and they were soon fast asleep.

Chapter 10

It was the next morning in Knoxville and the sound of traffic on Interstate 75 got louder.

Mike crawled out from his cubbyhole and stretched on the tailgate. He walked over to Ginger's cubbyhole. "Time to get up," he said to her.

"Not yet, I want to sleep for another couple of hours," she quietly said from while she lay in her cubbyhole.

"We better hurry up and find some breakfast before our ride takes off," he said.

Ginger didn't reply for a few seconds. "You're right," she said then got out of her cubbyhole.

"Let's go grab some food," Mike said then jumped off the tailgate.

"I'm shocked you're in a hurry to eat out of the garbage," she replied while she jumped off the tailgate.

"Like you said before, it's either the trash or we starve," he responded while they ran through the parking lot and headed back to the

Waffle House.

Twenty minutes later, Ginger and Mike filled their tummies from the garbage of the Waffle House. Breakfast consisted of discarded toast, muffins, and bacon.

They ran through the parking lot of the Super 8 Motel.

Mike stopped and looked a little lost. "Where's our ride?" he asked while he looked around the lot and Jimmy's truck wasn't in sight.

Mike ran down toward the other end of the lot and searched for Jimmy's truck, and it wasn't in sight.

He ran back to Ginger in a panic.

"He's gone. Now what?" he said when he got back to her.

Ginger looked the area over, and saw a Greyhound bus while it drove down the street in front of the motel. "Don't worry. I have another plan. Hurry!" she said while she ran off in the direction the bus drove.

"Now what?" Mike said while he ran after Ginger but knew she had an idea for a new mode of transportation.

While Ginger and Mike ran down the street, a stray cat slowly meandered up ahead of

them.

Ginger suddenly stopped the second she saw the cat.

Mike slammed into her rear. “What’s wrong?” he said while he back away from her furry rear end.

“Down the road a bit. There’s a cat!” she said with a snarl.

Mike saw the stray cat while it meandered down the sidewalk ahead of them.

“So what,” Mike replied and could care less about a cat.

“Let’s chase it, that’s what,” she said while she kept an evil eye on the cat.

“Why?”

“Because it’s fun,” she said while she bolted after the cat.

The cat sensed something was wrong and turned around. The cat’s eyes widened in fear at the sight of Ginger and Mike. “Dogs!” she cried out and ran away.

Ginger chased the cat.

“Dumb, dumb, and dumb!” Mike said sat down and watched Ginger chased the cat across the street.

Mike waited on the sidewalk for another

15 minutes and Ginger finally walked back over to him.

“Now that you’re done playing, can we continue with our trek up north?” Mike said a little irritated with Ginger.

“Sure,” Ginger said while she looked around the area and got a bearing on where she was in town. “Let’s go,” she said then walked off down the sidewalk.

Mike followed her down the sidewalk.

“Man was that fun! That cat ran like a scared rabbit,” Ginger chuckled proud of herself.

Dogs can be so stupid. Mike thought to himself.

Twenty minutes later, they walked down the street thru a residential neighborhood.

They walked by a house, and saw a boy while he threw a ball in his front yard. The boy’s Golden Retriever ran after the ball and snatched it up with his mouth. He trotted back and dropped the ball by the boy’s shoes. The boy threw the ball and his dog chased after it. He snatched it up with his mouth and trotted back over to the boy.

“That looks fun. He throws the ball, you get it, bring it back, and then he throws it, and

then you get it. It just repeats and repeats. Duh!” Ginger said and rolled her eyes not impressed.

“I remember as a boy playing ball with my dog,” Mike replied and didn’t think about his statement.

It dawned on Ginger what he said. “Did you say as a boy? You might have damaged your brain when you smacked it on that tailgate,” she replied a little concerned.

Mike faked a chuckle. “I meant playing ball with the boy from the family that owned me,” he said.

“It must be a stupid guy thing,” she responded.

They walked down the street then turned down another street.

Later that day, Ginger and Mike walked to the Greyhound Bus Station.

“A bus? How can we get a ride on a bus?” Mike asked a little concerned about her new plan.

They walked around the station to the rear area where the buses arrived and departed.

They walked over and cowered under a concrete bench and watched the busses.

Five hours later and it looked hopeless for using a bus as a ride to Pennsylvania.

“This isn’t working,” Mike said and crawled out from under the bench.

“Where are you going?” she asked extremely concerned.

“Home,” he said while he walked away.

Ginger hurriedly crawled out from under the bench.

“How?” she asked concerned.

“Walking,” he replied then walked away and wasn’t thrilled of spending countless days walking.

“Don’t give up just yet,” she replied while a bus pulled into the entrance of the area. She glanced over at the bus and her eyes widened. “That bus will work,” she said.

Mike looked and saw a bus with Cleveland on the front marquee. “That would get us north of Pittsburgh, and that’s closer than where we are now,” he replied then he quickly crawled under the bench.

Ginger joined him and crawled under the bench.

“So, how can we sneak on that bus?” he asked curiously.

“Just wait and our opportunity will open up,” she replied while she kept an eye on the bus.

The door opened, and the driver stepped out. He walked over to the side and opened up the baggage compartment. He started unloading suitcases while people stepped off the bus. They walked over and grabbed their suitcases then walked into the station.

The driver removed all the required suitcases and left the baggage doors opened. He walked away and went inside the station.

“Let's roll,” she said while she quickly crawled out from under the bench then bolted to the bus.

Mike quickly crawled out from under the bench and ran after Ginger. “What is her plan?” he asked while he chased after her.

Ginger jumped inside the luggage compartment.

Mike didn't question and he jumped inside the compartment.

“Smart plan, I'm impressed,” Mike said while he followed her to the rear of the compartment.

“This is one of the many ways I hitch a ride,” she said while she sat down.

“You hit the jackpot with this bus, it'll

get me closer to home,” Mike said then his doggie instinct took over and he licked Ginger’s face.

She giggled and loved his licks on her face.

Then it dawned on him what he did. *I’m turning into a real dog!* He thought to himself and got worried.

They waited in the compartment.

An hour later, Ginger and Mike started to fall asleep but the sound of luggage being loaded into the compartment woke them up.

“We’re on our way,” she said while they watched luggage filling up the compartment.

Ten minutes later, the compartment got darker and darker while it was being filled up with luggage. Then the compartment doors were slammed shut and it was completely dark inside.

“We might as well sleep to pass the time,” Mike said.

Then they heard the bus engine start. “And we’re off and will be in Cleveland before you know it,” she said then closed her eyes.

Mike closed his eyes and started to fall asleep.

“The wheels on the bus go round and round,” Ginger quietly sang out a kid’s song.

“What are you doing?” he asked.

“Singing a song. What do you think?” she said. “Come on, join in. “The wheels on the bus go round and round,” she added.

“Let’s not and say we did,” he said.

“Don’t be a party pooper. Sing along,” she replied.

“What if a human up above us on the bus hears us? Then the driver will stop and investigate the barking in this compartment,” he warned her.

She stopped and thought about his comment. “You could be right,” she said then. “It might be better if we just sleep the time away,” she added then closed her eyes.

I hate that song! Mike thought to himself remembering when Jenny would sing it day in and day out.

It was quiet and dark while the bus drove up the north ramp for Interstate 75.

All Mike could think about while he closed his eyes were Debbie and the kids.

About six hours had passed and it was in the wee hours of the morning. While the bus

drove closer to Cleveland, Mike had a dream while he slept.

In his dream, Mike walked back to his home and he was a human again.

He walked to the front door and knocked.

The door opened and Debbie appeared.

She smiled the second she saw Mike and ran outside where she hugged him.

Then Jenny saw Mike from the living room and she ran outside where she hugged Mike.

Then Chris saw Mike from the living room and he ran outside where he hugged him.

They whisked Mike inside his home as one happy family.

While Debbie closed the front door, it sounded like tires screeching. Then the second the door closed there was a loud crash sound.

Mike looked around his living room confused over that sound. Then he heard people scream while his house turned on its side. Mike, Debbie and the kids were thrown onto the wall, which was now the floor. Then something invisible smacked Mike in his head. The sound of metal scraping was loud and the house shook and it appeared to be sliding. Then there was a

loud crash and there was an eerie silence.

“Mike, are you okay,” Ginger’s voice echoed through out his house.

Mike looked around in a daze at his house.

Mike woke up from his dream and saw part of the night sky full of stars through the opened luggage compartment door above him. The full Moon provided some light into the compartment.

“What happened?” he asked confused.

“I think we had an accident,” Ginger replied in the darkness.

“Are you okay?” Mike asked while he looked around in the dark.

“I’m fine,” Ginger replied.

“Good,” Mike replied while he looked up at the opened luggage compartment door.

“Are you okay?” she asked.

“I think a suitcase hit me in the head, but I’m fine,” he said while he cringed in pain.

“We better get out of here,” she replied while she looked at the mountain of suitcases that provided access to the opened door.

Ginger climbed up the tossed luggage to the opened door.

Mike followed her up the suitcases.
Ginger jumped out through the opening.
Mike jumped out through the opening.

They both landed on the ground and looked up and saw the bus was on its side with its front end smashed into a tree just off Interstate 71 about ten miles south of Cleveland. They could hear people inside the buss crying in pain.

“We better get out of here,” Ginger told Mike.

They ran off toward a nearby field.

Hours later, Ginger and Mike continued walking away from the bus accident and were now in some woods along Interstate 71.

Ten minutes later, Ginger and Mike ran across someone sleeping in the woods, and it was a homeless guy.

Ginger stopped and looked at the guy.

Mike stopped and looked at Ginger.

“What’s wrong?” he asked.

“There’s a human over there,” she replied.

The guy woke up when he heard Ginger

and looked over at her. It was Howard Langley, and he smiled the second he saw Ginger.

“Ginger my girl!” he excitedly said while he sat up.

“How did he know your name?” Mike asked curiously.

“I often would travel with Howard and he gave me my name of Ginger,” she replied while she rushed over to Howard wagging her tail.

Howard petted Ginger’s head while she licked his face. “Good seeing you again, girl,” he replied then he spotted Mike. “I see you have a friend,” he said.

Howard got up and walked over to Mike, and he knelt down. “Hello there. My name is Howard,” he said while he petted Mike’s head then saw the collar around Mike’s neck. “I see your name is Peewee,” he added.

“Please. Don’t call me Peewee. Call me Mike,” he said.

All Howard heard was Mike barking. “Okay, okay, Peewee,” he said while he continued to pet Mike’s head.

What’s the use? Mike thought in his head but he enjoyed the head petting.

“So Ginger, would you like to travel with me?” he asked.

“Yes!” Ginger replied back.

Mike looked at Howard and had this feeling he’s seen him before but couldn’t figure out where.

“Good, now where? Chicago?” he asked Ginger.

She just looked at him.

“Ok, how about Dallas?” he asked her.

She just looked at him.

“Pittsburgh?” he asked her.

“Yes, Pittsburgh!” Ginger quickly replied while she wagged her tail.

All Howard heard was Ginger barking and that was an indication of where she wanted to head. “Then Pittsburgh it is,” he said then walked over and rummaged through his ratty backpack. He pulled out a train schedule and looked it over.

“The train for Pittsburgh leaves later tonight. So we have some time,” Howard said then shoved the schedule back in his backpack. He looked at the dogs. “Are you both hungry?” he asked.

Ginger and Mike wagged their tails.

“I take that as a yes,” he said then bent down and picked up his dirty brown Fedora hat and placed it on his head. “Stay here and I’ll get

us some grub,” Howard said then walked away.

Mike watched Howard while he walked away between some trees. “Where have I seen him before?” Mike quietly said to himself, as it started to bug him.

Ginger lay on the ground and closed her eyes.

Mike lay next to her and pondered how would his family react to him when he showed up at his home. Then he wondered how could he turn himself back into a human again. His eyes welled up thinking he would be a dog for the rest of his life.

Thirty minutes later, Howard returned with some hamburgers he bought from Burger King. He got the money panhandling out in the street and refused to steal for cash. He had a double cheeseburger for himself and Whopper Junior each for Ginger and Mike.

They chowed down on the juicy hamburgers.

After they ate, they relaxed in the woods until the sun dropped below the horizon.

Howard looked at his watch. “We have a couple of hours until the train to Pittsburgh

leaves,” he told Ginger and Mike. He got up and slung the backpack around his shoulder. He picked up his ratty old brown Fedora hat. “Let’s head out of here,” he told Ginger and Mike then started walking away and wore his hat.

Ginger and Mike followed Howard while he walked through the woods.

Along the way to the train yard, Howard bought some food at a convenience store for their ride to Pittsburgh.

They snuck through the train yard and Howard stopped while he double-checked his train schedule. “There she is,” he said and pointed at a freight train about fifty feet away.

Howard rushed across numerous train tracks and headed to the freight train.

They arrived at one of the freight cars and Howard immediately slid the door open. He bent down and picked Ginger up and placed her inside the car. He bent down and picked up Mike and placed him inside the car. Howard climbed up inside the car.

“Move away to the other end of the car,” Howard said while he slid the door closed and it was dark inside the car.

They all sat in the darkness of the freight car, which had some wooden crates of various supplies destined for Pittsburgh.

It was hours later, and the freight train was out of the Cleveland city area. It raced in the Ohio countryside and headed to Pittsburgh.

Howard slid the door of the boxcar opened and he sat in the opening and let his feet dangled outside. Ginger sat by his right side and Mike sat by his left side. They watched while the dark Ohio countryside whizzed along.

Howard removed some beef jerky from the bag he bought at a convenience store. He handed a piece of beef jerky to Ginger, who wagged her tail, then he handed Mike a piece of jerky. Both dogs munched down on the treat.

“Ginger sure loves beef jerky,” Howard said while he rubbed her head while he watched the countryside whizz by.

Ginger and Mike finished eating their beef jerky.

“Yeah little doggies, I didn't always travel like this,” he told them while he munched on a piece of beef jerky. “I had a job, a wife and

a house. I had a good life,” he said while he chewed on his snack. “Then my wife got breast cancer right before my plant closed down and I lost my job,” he added while he continued to chew on his jerky. “All my savings went to the hospital and doctor’s for her care. Then she died from the cancer. After that I went broke and since we never had kids and I don’t have any other family members to help me out, so I’ve been on the streets ever since,” he said then took another bite of his jerky. “And once you get on the streets, nobody will give you a second chance,” he said while his eyes welled up and he chewed his jerky.

He reached in the bag and handed Ginger and Mike another piece of beef jerky.

“Well, enough of my sob story. Let’s get some shut-eye,” he said while he got up and walked to the other end of the boxcar.

Mike felt sorry for Howard while he watched him walk to the other end of the car and went to sleep.

“Howard’s a good traveling companion, as he always feeds me. He found me as a pup in the woods after my owners abandoned me. He’s been a good friend,” Ginger quietly told Mike then she yawned. “I’m going to get some sleep,”

Ginger said and walked off.

Mike watched while Ginger walked over and curled up next to Howard and closed her eyes.

Mike stared out of the boxcar. Then it dawned on him and he remembered where he met Howard. He glanced over at Howard and felt like a huge jerk for the way he treated him in the past.

Chapter 11

It was the next morning and the freight train slowly pulled into the train yard in Pittsburgh.

Howard jumped out of their boxcar and ran alongside of it. He grabbed Ginger out of the car and set her down on the ground. He then grabbed Mike out of the boxcar and set him down on the ground.

They walked across the tracks.

“Get out of my yard!” a railroad employee yelled twenty feet away.

They turned around, and saw the railroad employee while he ran toward them.

“We better go in different directions. Have a safe journey, Ginger and Mike,” Howard said while he ran off across the numerous railroad tracks.

Ginger and Mike ran off in a different direction.

It was hours later that afternoon and Ginger and Mike safely made it to a residential

neighborhood in the northwest area of Pittsburgh.

They walked down the neighborhood street.

They walk past one front yard where two mean German Shepherds lay in the grass.

“How will we get to New Castle?” Mike asked Ginger.

“We’ll hitch a ride somehow. Don’t worry,” she replied.

The ears of one of the Shepherds perked up when he heard Ginger and Mike walking down the street.

“Well, well, we have two bums on our turf,” the one Shepherd named Adolf told his brother, Herman.

“We can’t have that,” Herman replied while he saw Ginger and Mike.

They got up and walked across their yard toward the street.

Ginger and Mike walked down the street unaware Adolf and Herman were stalking them from behind.

“We don’t want you homeless mutts on our turf!” Adolf snarled at Ginger and Mike.

Ginger and Mike stopped at the sound of Adolf’s voice and they turned around.

“Yeah! Get a home you losers!” Herman snarled at Ginger and Mike.

“Go find a family!” Adolf added while he snarled.

Then Adolf and Herman growled with evil glaring from their eyes.

Ginger and Mike’s eyes widened in panic at the sight of this threat inching closer and closer at them.

“Run!” Ginger cried out then bolted off down the street.

Mike stood there and just stared at the Shepherds.

“Run you dummy!” Ginger yelled from down the end of the street.

It finally dawned on Mike he was in danger and he turned around and ran down the street.

Adolf and Herman chased after them.

Ginger turned right and ran down another street.

Mike turned right and ran after her.

Adolf and Herman turned right and ran after Ginger and Mike.

Adolf bolted past Mike and headed after Ginger. When he got close he lunged after her and bit her hind leg.

“Ahhhh!” Ginger screamed out in pain while she tumbled on the street with Adolf.

Adolf stood over Ginger while she lay hurt in the street. “I’m going to make sure you never come back to my turf,” Adolf said while he snarled down at Ginger.

She shook in fear thinking this would be the end of her life.

The sight of Adolf threatening Ginger gave Mike a sudden burst of courage. He ran up to Adolf and stood up on his hind legs and immediately smacked Adolf in his eye with his paw.

Adolf looked surprised at Mike.

Mike smacked Adolf in his eye again.

Herman stood nearby in disbelief at the sight of Mike smacking Adolf in his eyes.

“Ouch!” Adolf cried out in pain and suddenly got scared of Mike.

He jumped off Ginger and ran off over to Herman.

“Let’s get out of here,” Adolf told Herman while he closed his eye that Mike punched.

They ran off down the street. “What kind of dog hits you in the eye with his paw?” Adolf said with his tail between his legs while he ran.

“I've never seen that kind of fighting before. How could he stand up on his hind legs,” Herman asked.

“I don't know, but we better git home before he comes after us,” Adolf replied while they turned down another street and headed home.

Mike looked down the street and felt assured it was safe. He looked at Ginger, and saw her bloody leg. “Ginger it looks like you can't finish the trip, so thanks for helping me. I'm not too far from home and I'll be fine,” Mike said then turned away and walked down the street.

“Please don't leave me Mike!” Ginger called out.

Mike just walked away down the street.

“Mike! Help!” she pleaded.

Mike stopped and turned around. He saw Ginger limp down the street after him. He walked away thinking there was nothing he could do to help her. Right now, getting back home was Mike's top priority.

“Please Mike!” Ginger cried out.

Mike stopped and turned around. He saw Ginger while she limped toward him.

“Ah man!” he said then he turned around and walked back to Ginger.

“We need to do something to your leg before it gets infected,” he said while he looked at her wound on her left hind leg.

“You can lick it,” she said.

“I’ll only take this doggy thing so far. I’ll come up with something else,” he said then turned around and walked away.

Ginger limped behind him.

Ten minutes later, Mike and Ginger walked upon a Walgreens drug store.

“I’ll find something in this store to help,” he said while he walked her to the rear of the building.

“Stay here,” he told her while he walked around the side of the building to headed to the entrance.

Mike walked to the front of Walgreens and watched while people entered and exited the store.

The coast was clear and Mike ran to the front door. The electronic eye opened the door and Mike bolted inside the store.

Mike ran inside the store where the customers were too busy to notice a dog.

He turned down a greeting card aisle.

He turned out of the greeting card aisle and bolted to the area for medical supplies, etc.

He slowed down the aisle and scanned the items on the shelves. Then he stopped and jumped up and knocked down a box of Blood Stop bandages.

A teenage employee walked down the aisle and saw Mike with the box of Blood Stop bandages in his mouth.

“Give me that box!” the teenage employee yelled.

Mike looked up and saw the teenager, and he ran with the box in his mouth.

The teenager chased after Mike.

Mike ran down the aisle and turned down another aisle.

He ran down that aisle with the teenager hot on his tail.

Mike turned and ran down the main aisle toward the front doors.

Mike raced down the main aisle to the front doors.

The teenager swooped down and tried to grab Mike’s tail, and he missed.

Then a large woman walked out from another aisle and walked in front of Mike. He bolted between her legs the split second the teenager tried to grab Mike's tail again.

The teenager missed Mike's tail, and rammed his head into the buttocks of the large woman.

"Ahhhh!" the woman screamed out while she and the teenager tumbled to the floor.

Mike ran out the front doors of the store.

Mike ran down the side of the building with the box still in his mouth.

He ran to the rear of the building where Ginger lay near some bushes.

"Let's get out of here?" Mike said with a muffled sound since the box was still was in his mouth.

"Leps gout a deer?" Ginger replied, as that's what she heard then she saw the teenager at the corner of the building.

"Give me those bandages!" the teenager yelled out of breath.

She understood Mike's message and painfully stood up.

Mike ran through the hedges.

Ginger limped after her.

“It’s not worth it,” the teenager said while he watched Ginger and Mike rush through the adjacent property.

A little while later at the rear of another store, Mike tore open the box with his paws and teeth. He then tore open one of the packets and used his paws to install one of the bandages over her wound. “There. That should prevent infection.”

Ginger walked over to Mike, and licked his face, which tickled him, and he giggled.

“You’re so sweet Mike,” she said and licked Mike’s face again.

“I hope she realizes I’m married,” Mike quietly said to himself.

“Come, we need to get out of this town,” she said then limped away.

Mike walked after her and they headed to the street.

The sun dropped below the horizon and darkness fell upon the Pittsburgh.

Ginger still limped and Mike walked down the two-lane road called Brodhead just northwest of the city. Jets were heard nearby since the Pittsburgh International airport located south of the road.

“I’m exhausted,” she said and sat down on the road.

A pickup truck whizzed by them in the middle of the road and the driver blew his horn.

Ginger and Mike were too tired to be started by the horn.

Mike looked around the area and saw a small clump of trees across the road. “We can sleep over there tonight,” he said then walked across the road.

Ginger got up and limped across the road after him.

Later that night, Ginger and Mike cuddled in the woods sound asleep.

Chapter 12

It was another beautiful morning in Pennsylvania.

Ginger and Mike woke up early and after a good stretch, they both headed out of the woods and went back to Brodhead Road.

An hour later, Ginger and Mike walked down Brodhead Road and soon headed into Coraopolis and soon saw O'Hara's Pub.

"Let's try to find some food," Ginger said while they saw the pub off to the left.

"Sure, I kinda miss garbage food," Mike replied with a tone of sarcasm in his voice.

They walked through the parking lot where some cars, pickups and other vehicles were parked.

They walked to the rear of the pub and saw the garbage dumpster without garbage bags on the ground.

"Rats," Ginger said disappointed and her stomach growled.

"Let's see if we can find another place,"

Mike said.

They walked around to the parking lot.

Then Mike's widened when he saw a familiar sight. "There's Gus's truck. I know him," he said while he ran over to a truck that had a bulldozer chained to a lowboy trailer.

Ginger ran over and saw the Gus Whorley's Land Clearing Company, New Castle, PA sign on the door of the truck. "How lucky are we?" she said.

Mike jumped up on the lowboy trailer. "Gus will get us to New Castle," Mike said while he motioned with his head for Ginger to join him.

Ginger limped and tried to jump on the lowboy. She didn't make it to the top of the trailer.

"Come on girl. I know you can do it!" Mike coached her.

Ginger walked ten feet away and faced the lowboy trailer. She cringed in pain while she ran as fast as she could and jumped up on the trailer.

"I knew you could do it," Mike said then he rushed over and got under the bulldozer.

Ginger limped and joined him under the bulldozer.

They waited under the bulldozer between the tracks.

Thirty minutes later, Gus walked out of the pub and walked to his truck. He didn't notice the two dogs that hid under his bulldozer. He got in his truck and started it up.

Gus drove his truck out of parking lot of the pub and headed north on Brodhead Road.

A little while later, Gus drove his truck down Gringo Road and got on the ramp and headed north on Interstate 376.

Later that day, Gus drove his truck down an exit ramp off Interstate 376 into New Castle.

A little while later, Gus stopped his truck at a traffic light.

“This is where I get off. Thanks Ginger for all your help,” Mike said then quickly rushed from under the bulldozer and jumped off the trailer.

Mike ran off down the street.

A few seconds later, Mike heard someone behind him. He turned around and saw Ginger running with a limp after him.

“I guess there's no getting rid of her,” he said to himself then waited for Ginger.

“I need to make sure you safely make it home,” Ginger said.

Mike walked away and hoped he could get rid of her while he got back to his family.

“I've been to this town numerous times. Good place to get food, as some of the humans are friendly to homeless dogs. Then some are not,” Ginger said while she limped along behind Mike.

He wasn't paying attention to her since he had his family on his mind.

Later that day, Ginger and Mike walked upon the housing development that he worked on when he was a human a year ago. The development was about ninety-eight percent completed and already had people enjoying their new homes.

Mike looked shocked when he saw the sign at his old office trailer that was now the Gates Construction Company. “Gates Construction? How could Russ take over my business?” Mike asked and looked confused.

“My business? What do you mean by that?” she asked a little baffled.

“Ah, I mean I would walk down this way sometimes,” he replied and wasn’t sure she would buy his story but that was all he could come up with at the spur of the moment.

“That’s funny, I would visit this place and I’ve never seen you here,” Ginger said.

“You would visit this place?” Mike asked curiously.

“Yeah. One of the workers was cool and would feed me part of his lunch. Roast beef is my favorite,” she answered.

“That’s where I know you from,” he replied.

“You seen me here before? Why didn’t you come join me? I would have shared my roast beef with you,” she responded.

Then Mike remembered how he treated her in the past. “I was somewhat of a jerk,” Mike said then felt ashamed.

“I wouldn’t say that, I think you’re a sweet caring dog,” she replied then walked up to him and licked his face.

“Thanks,” Mike replied.

“We better find your family before it gets dark,” she said while she looked up at the sunset.

They walked away.

An hour later, Mike walked Ginger down Kiscoe Avenue, where his home was located. His heart raced when he got closer and closer to his house. He pondered how he could turn back into a human. He wondered if he should just show up at the front door. Then he wondered how his family would they react.

His legs shook nervously while he walked down the sidewalk to his front yard.

He saw Debbie's mini-van parked in the driveway.

He got scared and sat down in his grass.

"Is that where your family lives?" Ginger asked while she sat next to him.

"Yep, that's the place," he replied while his eyes welled up.

"Well, I guess this is goodbye," Ginger responded while her eyes welled up and she got up. She moped away with a bit of a limp down the sidewalk.

Mike stared at his house and didn't realize Ginger walked away.

Mike looked and saw Ginger while she limped away. He looked back at his house and didn't have the nerve to go to the front door.

He got up and ran after Ginger.

"Aren't you going home?" she asked the

second he walked up to her side.

“Maybe later. I thought we could get something to eat,” he said.

“But I thought you wanted to go home?” she asked curiously.

“I’m not sure they’ll recognize me,” he replied.

“I’m not following you,” she replied.

“It’s a bizarre story of which you may never believe,” he responded.

“I guess a nice story over table scraps sounds nice,” she said.

Ginger and Mike walked away down the street.

Mike glanced back at his house.

They turned down another street.

They turned down another street.

They turned down another street. When they were half way down that, they heard a rustle in some small hedges by the sidewalk.

Ginger stopped and sniffed the air. Then she had a comfortable feeling about the rustling sound. “Hello,” she said to the bushes. Silence came from the bushes. “Come on out, we won’t hurt you,” she talked at the bushes.

Then a dog poked his head out of the hedges. It was Rascal who was bigger but

looked mangy from living on the streets for a year.

“Hi, I’m Ginger and this is my friend Mike,” she said.

“I’m Rascal,” he said while he walked out of the hedges.

Mike’s eyes widened with surprise when he realized it was the puppy he dumped in the woods last year.

“Why are you hiding behind the bushes?” Ginger asked curiously.

“I thought you were humans and got scared,” he said while he studied Ginger and Mike. “But as soon as I got in those hedges, a bug or something crawled on me,” Rascal added.

“Why are you scared of humans?” Ginger asked.

“It started a year ago. My mean human dropped me off in the woods and left me out there to starve,” he told her.

Mike got ashamed and looked away to avoid eye contact with Rascal.

“Why are some of them so mean?” Ginger asked.

“I don’t know. We’re supposed to be man’s best friend,” Rascal said.

“I was also dumped in the woods by my

owner. Now Mike here was accidently left behind in Alabama when his owners went to Florida for vacation,” Ginger told Rascal.

Mike remained quiet and then his stomach growled.

Ginger looked at Mike then at Rascal. “Are you hungry Rascal?” she asked him.

“You bet!” Rascal replied and wagged his tail.

“Well then, please join us,” she offered.

“I would love that and I know the perfect place,” Ginger replied.

Then Rascal thought for a second. “Momma’s?” he asked her.

“Yep,” Ginger replied.

“I love Momma’s,” Rascal said while his mouth salivated.

Ginger walked away and Rascal followed alongside her.

Mike watched. “Are you punishing me?” he said while he looked up at the sky. Then he walked off and joined Ginger and Rascal.

Twenty minutes later, Ginger and Rascal were at the rear screen door of Mamma’s Great Cooking restaurant.

“Momma!” Ginger yelled out at the

screen door.

Rascal wagged his tail in anticipation of some food.

“Are you nuts Ginger? They’ll come and chase us away,” Mike said while he looked around for a place to run.

“Don’t worry, I know what I doing,” Ginger said with a voice of strong confidence.

Then a large seventy-year-old while haired woman named Momma came to the screen door and opened it. Her eyes lit up with joy the second she saw Ginger and Rascal. “Hey you two. I haven’t seen either one of you in a while,” Momma said then she saw Mike. “And you brought a friend,” Momma added then she walked back inside the kitchen.

Momma’s restaurant! Mike said to himself, as he brought his family here many times for dinner. His mouth watered, as he knew her cooking was the best.

Momma returned a few minutes with three plates that each had five meatballs. She opened the screen door and placed the plates on the ground. “Here you go my sweethearts,” Momma said then she went back inside the kitchen.

Ginger, Mike and Rascal each started to

munch down on their meatballs.

Momma came back to the screen door and brought three bowls of fresh water. She set a bowl down by each of the dogs.

“I wish I could keep you all, but I already have three other dogs,” Momma said to the dogs.

Ginger walked up and Momma’s legs. Momma bent down and petted Ginger’s head. “You’re welcome and come back tomorrow,” Momma said then she stood up and went back inside her kitchen to supervise her cooks.

Ten minutes later and Ginger, Rascal and Mike relaxed at the rear of Momma’s restaurant with their tummies full of meatballs.

“So Mike, let’s hear your bizarre story?” Ginger said.

“I love stories. My little female human would read to me at night in her bed,” Rascal said.

Mike looked at Rascal and knew he talked about Jenny.

Ginger burped. “Oh, excuse me for not acting like a lady,” she said.

Rascal giggled about Ginger’s burping.

“Come on Mike, tell us your story,” she requested.

“Please Mike,” Rascal said.

“It's a stupid story and I don't think you'll want to hear it or believe it,” Mike told them.

“Of course we want to hear it and we'll believe it. Won't we Rascal?” Ginger said.

Rascal nodded in agreement with Ginger.

Mike thought for a second. “I guess I should finally confess,” Mike said then paused for a few seconds while glanced at Ginger and Rascal's curious eyes. “Well, my real name is Mike Hanson and I was a human a year ago,” he said.

Ginger and Rascal just looked at Mike in a little disbelief. Then they both started busting out laughing and rolled over on their backs while they laughed out loud.

“You're a human, how funny!” Ginger said between laughs.

Rascal laughed then he stopped when something dawned on him. “Wait a minute, that human name sounds familiar,” Rascal said while he tried to recall where he heard that name.

Ginger sat up and wiped the tears of laughter out of her eyes with a paw. “What do you mean?” she asked Rascal.

Rascal strained to remember why that name sounded so familiar. Then his eyes

widened the second he remembered the name. “My owner that left me in the woods had the name of Mike Hanson,” he said a little unsure then he thought about it for a few seconds. His eyes lit up. “Yes, it was Mike Hanson,” he added again and he was confident.

“You broke my Les Paul guitar on day and I came home from work and I chased you in the house,” Mike told Rascal.

“I don't know what that is, but I remember breaking something that got my human really mad,” Rascal said.

“My Les Paul made a twanging sound,” Mike told Rascal.

“Yeah, now I remember,” Rascal replied and remembered that horrible day.

“And Ginger, I would chase you away from my construction site when one of my workers would feed you. I also tried to run over you with my truck while you walked down the road from my construction side,” Mike told Ginger and looked ashamed.

“And Rascal, I built a wooden house and made you stay out in my backyard. My son's name is Chris and my daughter is Jenny. They loved you,” Mike told Rascal.

Ginger was stunned with the news and

then she got mad. “How could you be so mean?” she yelled at Mike.

“I’m ashamed of myself for that. I wish I could turn back time and be kinder,” Mike said.

Ginger and Rascal were quiet while they thought about Mike’s story.

“Please don’t hate me! I’m so sorry!” Mike pleaded and his eyes watered.

Ginger and Rascal thought for a second about Mike’s proposal.

“You did take care of me when those mean dogs attacked us. So you must be sincere,” Ginger told Mike. Then she looked at Rascal. “What do you think Rascal?”

Rascal thought for a few seconds about Ginger’s question. “We’re supposed to be man’s best friend. I guess we can forgive him,” Rascal replied.

“Thanks. You’re the best and I’m going to make it up to you, just wait and see. But I do need your help,” Mike told them.

“How’s that?” Ginger asked curiously.

“Help me turn back into a human again,” he replied.

“How do we do that?” Rascal said.

“Well, I really believe that my neighbor used some kind of Voodoo potion on me,” he

told them.

“How do you know that?” Ginger asked.

“I remember waking up while sleeping on the couch and seeing her face glaring down at me. Then I went back to sleep and woke up as a dog in Alabama,” he replied.

“But how can we help turn you back into a human?” Ginger asked and Rascal nodded in agreement with her question.

We need to find out if a potion exists to reverse the potion Louise placed on me,” Mike said.

Ginger and Rascal looked at each other and looked a little confused.

“I don’t know what a potion is or how to find one,” Ginger replied.

“Is it something we can find in the woods?” Rascal asked curiously.

“Maybe Momma can make us a potion?” Ginger added.

“No, it’s something Louise would have in her house,” Mike said.

Ginger and Rascal thought about Mike’s response for a few seconds.

Ginger looked at the sunset sky. “We better find a place to sleep and work on this first thing in the morning,” she said.

“I know of some woods on the other side of town,” Rascal said.

“Great. Let’s get some sleep and then we can turn Mike back into a human tomorrow,” Ginger said.

“Thank you all,” Mike said.

“You better pay us back for helping you,” Ginger said with a serious tone.

“Yeah, especially after the way you treated us,” Rascal added.

“I will. I promise,” Mike said and held up his paw.

“Okay. I trust you,” Ginger said.

They all walked away from the rear of the restaurant.

Later that night, Rascal led them to some woods located on the east side of New Castle.

They were soon fast asleep except for Mike who tossed and turned in the dirt nervous they might not find a potion to turn him back into a human.

Chapter 13

The sun rose again for the start of another day in New Castle.

Ginger, Mike and Rascal woke up when the sun peeked through the woods, and they all stretched.

“Well Mike, are you read to go home?” Ginger asked him.

Mike looked unsure how he would be able to find a potion but deep down inside, he knew Louise had to have something.

“I’m ready,” Mike replied to Ginger.
They walked out of the woods.

An hour later, Ginger, Mike and Rascal all looked determined while they marched down his neighborhood to start their mission.

While they walked down his street, an old man peeked out his living room window and saw the dogs. The old man frowned at this sight and rushed away from his window.

They walked up to Mike’s house and sat

on the sidewalk. Mike's home looked empty since Debbie's mini-van wasn't in the driveway.

"Debbie's probably at work and the kids are probably in school," Mike said while memories of better times flooded his head while he stared at his home.

"So where does this Voodoo lady live?" Ginger said while she looked around at all the houses.

"The house to the right of mine," he said but then noticed it was now painted a light brown. He shrugged the color change off and stood up. "She does own this big huge dog," Mike recalled.

"That could be a problem," Ginger said while she recalled the recent encounter with the two Shepherds.

"He seemed friendly when I lived there," Rascal said.

The sound of the brakes of a vehicle was heard behind them.

"Let's come back later tonight," he told everybody.

They turned around and saw two Dog Catchers, Ernie and Peter, get out and rushed over to the side of their truck. They quickly removed two long snare poles.

“Dog catchers, run!” Ginger screamed out.

Ginger, Rascal and Mike all ran off in separate directions.

Ernie ran after Rascal.

Peter ran after Mike.

It soon looked like a Keystone Kops chase scene while Ernie and Peter ran in circles after Rascal and Mike.

Ginger ran down the street. She stopped and sat on a sidewalk to watch to see if her friends escaped.

Mike and Rascal zigged and zagged in the neighbor’s front yards.

Ernie tripped over his pole and tumbled in a front yard. He quickly got up and bolted after Rascal.

He was able to catch Rascal with his snare pole a few minutes later.

Ernie waked Rascal over to the truck.

Peter was able to catch Mike with his snare pole, and he walked Mike over to the truck.

Ginger watched from down the street while Ernie and Peter placed Mike and Rascal in the back of their truck.

Peter and Ernie got inside the truck and

drove away.

“I’ll try to rescue you!” Ginger yelled at the truck when she saw Mike and Rascal’s sad faces peek out the barred windows at the rear of the dog pound truck.

She ran after the dog pound truck.

Later that day, Mike and Rascal sat inside separate cages next to each other. Mike looked across his cage and saw cages stacked upon cages where inside them were other dogs and cats that waited for their fate.

“I’ve been successful at escaping these dog catchers until today,” Rascal told Mike through the cage bars.

Then a Hound dog with sad droopy eyes in a cage across from Mike’s cage stuck his nose out between his cage bars. “Nobody knows, the troubles I’ve seen. Nobody knows, my sorrows,” the Hound dog sang out with a deep bass voice.

“Why did you hate me?” Rascal asked Mike from his cage.

“It’s not your fault Rascal. It started when I was a kid. Our family dog got rabies, he bit me, and the doctor gave me stitches and a bunch of rabies shots,” Mike responded and felt terrible for the way he treated Rascal.

“I’m sorry to hear that and I’m sorry I broke your Les Paul thingy,” Rascal replied with sincerity in his voice.

“That’s alright. I could always get another one. If I was human,” Mike replied then his eyes welled up believing he would remain a dog for the rest of his life and never see his family again. He lay in the cage and closed his eyes. *If I was human!* He thought over and over again to himself. He closed his eyes and was soon asleep.

Hours later, and Mike woke up inside his cage. He looked around and looked sad when he realized he was still inside the dog pound.

“Psst, Mike. What’s going to happen to us?” Rascal asked from his cage.

Mike sat up. “I’m afraid if nobody claims us, it’s the end of the road of our doggy lives,” Mike replied.

Rascal looked sad while he looked through his cage bars, then his eyes widen with joy. “It’s Kenny! Hey Kenny!” he yelled out.

Mike’s ears perked up, as that was a name from the past, and he looked through his cage bars.

Kenny walked through the dog pound,

and looked at the cages. His eyes widen when he saw Rascal, as he recognized that patch of hair on his side.

Rascal barked at Kenny and wagged his tail.

“Rascal! I don't believe it. It's Rascal!” Kenny called out in joy then he looked back at the other end of the kennel. “Hey Joe,” he called out.

Joe Smithson was the manager of the dog pound and he walked over to Kenny. “Yeah,” he replied.

“Get Rascal out of this cage. He's coming with me,” Kenny requested.

Rascal wagged his tail knowing Kenny was going to spring him free.

Mike watched through his cage while Joe grabbed Rascal out and handed him to Kenny.

“Good to see you, Rascal. Debbie and the kids will be so happy to see you again,” Kenny said while he petted Rascal's head.

“Hey Rascal. Please don't forget about me. I know I treated you wrong, but don't let me die in here,” Mike called out.

Rascal looked at Mike. He then whined and clawed at Mike's cage.

“What's wrong Rascal?” Kenny asked

curiously when he saw Rascal clawing at Mike's cage.

Rascal whined louder and continued to claw harder at Mike's cage.

Kenny looked at Mike. "Is he your buddy?" Kenny asked.

"Yes!" Rascal replied.

"I know I treated you badly, but please take me home!" Mike called out.

Kenny heard Rascal and Mike bark.

"You have to take Mike!" Rascal said with a whine at Kenny.

Kenny heard Rascal whine then he hesitated for a second. "I'll take this dog also," he told Joe and pointed at Mike.

Joe opened up Mike's cage and removed him.

From the end of the dog pound parking lot, Ginger watched while Kenny and Joe placed Rascal and Mike in the backseat of Kenny's car.

Joe walked back inside while Kenny made a call on his cell phone.

"Hey Debbie, guess what?" he said excitedly into his cell phone.

"I give up what?" Debbie replied.

"I found Rascal at the pound," he said.

“You’re kidding?” she replied.

“No but he wants his friend to come with him if you don’t mind,” Kenny told her.

“Ah, sure. We can handle two dogs,” Debbie responded.

“Good, I’m on my way to your house,” Kenny said then got inside his car, and started up the engine.

“Everybody will be so happy to see you, Rascal. We spent months looking for you,” Kenny said while he drove his car out of the dog pound parking lot.

Kenny drove his car down the street.

Ginger ran down the street after Kenny's car.

Later that day, Mike and Rascal watched from the backseat while Kenny pulled into Mike’s driveway.

Kenny tooted his car horn.

Debbie, Jenny and Chris ran out of the front door and to Kenny's car just as he got out.

“There they are. I sure miss them,” Mike said while his eyes welled up at the sight of his family.

Chris and Jenny looked in the windows and their eyes lit up when they saw Rascal and Mike.

“They’ve grown some,” Mike said while he wagged his tail at his kids.

Debbie opened up the back door.

Rascal almost pushed Mike to the floorboard when he ran out of the backseat and jumped out of the car to the ground.

He ran up to Jenny while she bent down. He frantically licked her face so happy to see her again.

Mike slowly jumped out of the car and looked at his family. He didn’t know what to do while Debbie and Chris stared at him. Jenny was too busy hugging Rascal to pay attention to Mike.

“Rascal barked and whined and I took that to mean he wanted this other dog to come along. They must be friends,” Kenny told Debbie.

“We’ll take care of any friend of Rascal’s,” Debbie said while she bent down and petted Mike’s head.

Mike wagged his tail, as he loved the feeling of her hand on his head.

“Let’s get them inside and give them a

bath,” Debbie told the kids then she picked up Mike while Jenny picked up Rascal.

While they walked to the front door, a Dodge mini-van pulled into Louise’s driveway.

Mike watched while the Cooper family got out of the van with a white male French poodle named Napoleon. The Cooper family and Napoleon walked to the front door then went inside.

Mike looked worried when he saw them. Then it dawned on him. “Oh no! Louise moved!” Mike told Rascal.

“It’s not nice to bark at neighbors,” Debbie scolded Mike while she opened up the front door.

Debbie set Mike down on the living room floor.

He looked around the living room and it looked the same except for the new couch, lamps and another 52-inch HDTV.

Mike watched while Jenny and Chris hugged and kissed Rascal.

“Hey, what about me?” Mike said quietly.

Debbie heard Mike whine, and she knelt down to him.

“So what's your name?” she asked while she petted Mike's head.

“It's me Debbie. Mike!” he called out.

All Debbie heard was Mike barking and she frowned. “Don't bark in the house,” she said while she petted his head then saw his collar with “Peewee” as his name.

“You're kinda ugly, but there's something special about you. I don't like the Peewee name, so why don't we call you,” she said while she looked Mike over and thought of a new name. “I'll call you, Buster. That's it. You're Buster,” Debbie said.

First Peewee, now Buster! Mike thought to himself then he scratched behind his ear.

Debbie noticed Mike scratching behind his ear. “Let's get you cleaned up,” she said.

Mike wagged his tail at Debbie.

“Come Buster,” Debbie said then she walked down the hallway and Mike followed.

After Debbie filled the tub up halfway, she got some shampoo and placed Mike in the water. She proceeded to lather up Mike's dirty and filthy hairy body.

Fifteen minutes later, she was done and

dried Mike off with a towel.

Fifteen minutes later, Rascal had his bath and both dogs were one hundred percent cleaner.

Thirty minutes later, Kenny came back to Debbie's house with some dog food from his animal shelter and two dog dishes.

In the kitchen, Debbie placed the two dog dishes with dog food by the kitchen door.

"Dinner Rascal and Buster," she called out.

Rascal ran into kitchen and ran to the door then he immediately started eating.

Mike ran into the kitchen, and he stopped dead in his tracks when he saw the dog food in the bowls.

"You boys enjoy," Debbie said then she walked out of the kitchen.

"I was hoping for some of her great cooking," Mike said while he walked up to the bowl and stared at the canned dog food.

"This stuff is great!" Rascal said with a mouthful of food.

Mike sat down and watched while Rascal gulped down his food. His stomach growled, and he ignored it. His stomach growled louder

and he was starving since he hadn't eaten since last night at Momma's. "Ah man," he said then he ate a small portion of the food. "It's not that bad," he said then he took a bigger bite.

It was later that night in the Hanson home and it was quiet.

Jenny slept with Rascal curled up next to her on her bed.

Debbie slept with Mike curled up next to her on her bed.

Mike woke up and got off the bed.

He walked out of the room.

Mike walked into Jenny's bedroom and walked up to her bed, and he looked up at it. "Rascal," he softly called out and Rascal didn't respond. "Rascal," he softly called out again.

Rascal woke up and walked to the edge of the bed then looked down at the floor. "What?" he said then yawned.

"We need to talk," Mike said then he walked to the door.

Rascal jumped off the bed and followed Mike out of Jenny's bedroom.

Mike walked into the kitchen where Rascal followed.

Rascal sat on the floor while Mike paced

back and forth by the kitchen door.

Rascal's eyes closed and he started to drift off asleep.

"I'm in deep doggie doo doo. The voodoo lady moved. What am I going to do? I can't spend the rest of my life eating dog food," Mike said while he paced back and forth.

Mike saw Rascal asleep on the floor. "He's useless," Mike said then he walked out of the kitchen.

Ginger sat in Mike's backyard with sad eyes while she stared at Mike's porch.

"Everybody gets a family but me. All I get is the streets," she said while her eyes welled up then she moped away.

Chapter 14

It was the next morning and it was Saturday and the kids were so happy it was the weekend.

Inside Chris's room, Mike watched while his son rummaged through his closet. He removed a rubber baseball and his baseball glove.

"Let's play catch, Buster. I hope you like to play catch. I do. My daddy wouldn't play catch with me. He was always tired from working. Then he died while he slept on the couch last year," Chris said while he wore the glove and placed the rubber baseball inside it.

"Oh Chris, my son, I'm not dead. I'm here," Mike quietly said to himself.

Chris walked out of his room and Mike followed.

Chris walked down the hallway and while they passed by Jenny's bedroom, Mike saw Rascal while he sat on the floor by a small table. Jenny placed a wig on Rascal's head, where they played tea and crumpets.

“I’m so glad you could come over Miss Rascal. How are your children?” Jenny asked with a polite tone.

Rascal glanced out to the hallway and gave Mike a look that he wanted help.

Mike quietly chuckled to himself while he followed Chris down the hallway and into the kitchen.

Then out to the porch through the door.

A little while later, Chris walked Mike to the middle of their backyard.

“Okay Buster. I throw the ball then you chase it, get the ball with your mouth and bring it back to me,” Chris instructed.

I can handle that. Mike thought inside his head.

Chris threw the ball in the yard.

Mike ran after it, and caught the ball in the air with his mouth.

He ran the ball back to Chris.

“Good boy,” Chris said while he removed the ball from Mike’s mouth.

Chris threw the ball in his yard.

Mike ran after the ball, and caught it with his mouth after the ball bounced in the air after hitting the ground.

He ran the ball back to Chris, and wagged his tail.

“This is kinda fun!” Mike quietly said to himself.

“Hey Chris,” the voice of Danny Troy was heard from the house.

Chris and Mike turned and saw Danny, who was a forty-year-old hunk with short brown hair and a tanned muscular body.

Danny walked over to Chris.

“Who is this little fellow?” Danny said the second he saw Mike.

Mike looked up at Danny and he instantly got leery of the man.

“That's Buster. Uncle Kenny gave him to us,” Chris said.

“Hello Buster,” Danny replied then tried to pet.

Mike shied away from Danny's hand.

“I guess he's shy,” Danny said then he looked at Chris with his baseball glove. “Why don't I get my glove and we have a catch? It's in the trunk of my car,” he asked Chris.

“Sure!” Chris said excitedly.

Danny walked away and headed to the front of the house.

Chris looked down at Mike. “He's Mister

Troy, mommy's friend,” Chris said with a smile. “I saw him kissing mommy, but that's okay as he's fun and plays with us,” Chris added like he was telling a secret.

Mike looked mad over the fact that another man was kissing his wife then he felt like he was being replaced.

Chris threw the ball in the yard. “Go get it Buster,” he said.

Mike just sat in the grass and looked at the ball while it bounced a few times and stopped in the grass.

“I'll get it Chris,” Danny said while he ran over with his baseball glove.

Danny grabbed the ball and threw back to Chris who caught it.

Mike watched for five minutes while Chris and Danny had a catch with the ball.

He moped away to the back porch with his head hanging down.

He sat by the porch door and watched while his son had fun with another man.

“Hi Danny!” Debbie called out from the back porch.

“Hey sweetie!” Danny replied with a wink.

Mike watched while Debbie opened the porch door and looked down at him. “Do you want to come in Buster?” she asked.

Mike got up and walked into the back porch with Debbie.

They went inside the kitchen.

Debbie stayed in the kitchen and she unloaded the dishwasher.

Mike walked down the hallway, and looked into Jenny’s bedroom. He saw that Rascal still wore that wig on his head while Jenny placed a tea cup at his mouth to make it look like he was drinking.

Rascal saw Mike standing in the hallway. “Please help me!” he said with the saddest puppy dog eyes.

Jenny heard Rascal bark. “It’s not polite to bark at the table Miss Rascal,” Jenny scolded him by waving a finger at him.

Mike chuckled while he walked down the hallway.

He walked to his old bedroom and looked inside.

Mike walked inside his room and jumped on the bed.

He sat and stared at the dresser and saw

an old a picture of Debbie and him as a human. It was taken during their honeymoon to Orlando where they visited Sea World and Disney.

Debbie entered the room and saw Mike staring at the dresser. “What's so interesting, Buster?” she asked while she sat on the bed next to Mike.

Debbie saw the honeymoon picture of her and Mike. She rubbed Mike’s head. “That's my ex-husband Mike. He was killed last year by a bolt of lightning that came through the living room window. What a freak accident that was,” she told him while she looked sad and wiped away a tear. “I miss him, even though he was too busy with his job to spend time with us. But life goes on and now I found Danny,” Debbie added.

Mike looked ever so sad while he stared at Debbie.

“Danny's a good man and the kids love him, and we're planning on getting married,” she said with a warm smile.

Mike's ears perked up. *Married?* He said in his mind.

Mike lay on his stomach with the saddest puppy dog eyes.

“Yeah, life must continue,” she said

while she scratched Mike's back and stared at her honeymoon picture.

Mike closed his eyes while she scratched, as it felt so good and relaxed him.

A few seconds later, Mike got up and licked Debbie's face as his way to tell her how much he loved and missed her.

Debbie chuckled. "You're so sweet Buster,"

She got up off the bed. "I better go do a load of laundry," she said then walked out of the room.

Mike stared at his honeymoon picture and looked determined to become a human again.

A little while later and it was lunchtime and Debbie worked in the kitchen.

Mike walked into the kitchen and sat down at the other end of the room. He watched while Debbie made some peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the kids.

Danny walked into the kitchen and walked up behind Debbie. He placed his arms around her waist and kissed the back of her neck.

The hairs on the back of Mike's neck stood up and this was the first time, as a dog that

Mike wanted to bite the leg of a human. He quietly snarled his teeth at Danny. Then he moped out of the kitchen and walked down the hallway.

He stopped and looked inside his old playroom. He looked sad when he saw that it turned into a computer and game room for the kids.

“My whole life is slowly being erased,” Mike said while his eyes welled up.

He walked back to the kitchen and saw Debbie and Danny kissing and he couldn't stand it any longer.

“Quit kissing my wife!” Mike yelled out.

Debbie and Danny separated and looked at Mike.

“You okay Buster?” Debbie asked concerned.

“Dogs shouldn't bark in the house little buddy,” Danny scolded.

Mike walked away with his head hanging down.

“I wonder what's wrong with him?” Debbie asked.

“He probably smells your great cooking and realizes he can't have any,” Danny replied.

“It's only peanut butter and jelly

sandwiches for the kids,” she said with a smile. “But thank you for the compliment,” she added then gave him a kiss on his cheek.

Danny returned a kiss on Debbie’s cheek.

Mike entered the living room and saw Danny’s sneakers by his lazy boy chair.

He got an evil smirk when he walked over to the shoes. He looked around to make sure anybody could see him while he stood over Danny’s shoes. The coast was clear so he squatted over the left sneaker with an evil smile.

After he was done, he quietly walked out of the living room and went down the hallway.

He walked into his old bedroom and jumped up on the bed. He walked over to the spot where he slept as a human and curled up. He closed his eyes and was soon asleep.

An hour later, Mike woke up in his bed and looked around in a bit of a daze.

“I’ll run to the store for you. I have two items I want to get at eighty-four Lumber,” Danny called out from the living room.

Then Mike remembered what he previously did and he jumped off the bed.

He rushed down the hallway and saw Rascal asleep on Jenny’s bed while he passed by

her bedroom.

Mike poked his head around the archway into the living room. He saw Danny while he sat in the lazy boy chair. He slid a white sock into his right sneaker then tied it. Then Danny slid his other white sock into his left sneaker and his face cringed with discomfort, as something felt wet inside. Danny looked a little mad, as he knew one of the dogs peed in his shoe. But he knew he better remain cool since this isn't his house.

Mike lightly chuckled while he walked back down the hallway and headed back to his bedroom for another nap.

A little while later, Mike watched while Danny came back from the stores.

He went to the back porch and installed a new screen door that had a doggie door at the bottom.

After that, Danny installed a doggie door in the kitchen door.

Then Danny placed two food dishes and water dishes in the back porch by the kitchen door for Mike and Rascal.

Ten minutes later, Mike sat on top of the

couch. He peeked outside and watched while Debbie and Danny wore jogging outfits. They walked down the driveway and stretched in the front yard.

He watched while they both jogged off down the street.

He continued to watch and got upset. Then his eyes widened with an idea when he saw a Beagle at his backyard fence across the street.

He jumped down off the couch.

He ran out of the living room.

He ran through the kitchen and ran through the opened door.

He ran through the porch and used the doggie door for the first time.

Mike ran through the side yard and down his front yard.

He ran across the street and was lucky a car didn't flatten him because he forgot to look for traffic.

He ran through the front yard of the house across the street.

He ran to the fence where the Beagle watched him.

“Hey, my name is Mike and I live across the street,” Mike said.

“Hi Mike, my name is Snicker,” the Beagle replied.

“Snicker, do you remember that lady with the big dog that lived next door to me?” Mike asked.

Snicker looked at Louise’s old house. “Oh sure. Boodro was his name and I’m glad they moved away because he was mean,” Snicker responded.

Mike looked disappointed. “Do you know where?”

“Nope and I don’t care just as long as he doesn’t come back here,” Snicker replied.

“Thanks,” Mike turned around and moped back to his house.

Then Mike remembered something when his paws hit the street. He ran down the street to the house on the other side of Louise’s old house.

He ran to that house and through the front yard then he ran to the backyard fence. He looked through the fence and saw a black Labrador that relaxed under a shade tree. “Hey, can you help me?” Mike called out.

The Labrador got up and walked over to the fence.

“I’m Mike and do you know where

Boodro moved?” he asked with hopeful eyes.

“I’m Buddy and no I don’t and I never want to see that Cajun again! He was the meanest dog I’ve ever known,” Buddy said.

“Thanks,” Mike said then walked away disappointed.

Mike moped back down the street to his yard.

Later that afternoon, Mike sat on the top of the couch while Rascal also napped on the top of the couch at the other end. Mike peeked out the window and watched while Danny loaded Chris, in his Little League uniform, and Jenny into Debbie’s mini-van. Then Danny held the passenger door open for Debbie while she got inside. That’s something Mike never did and Debbie loved being treated like a lady. Then Danny got behind the wheel and they soon drove off down the street.

Mike jumped down to the cushions and lay on the pillow by the arm of the couch. He looked so sad.

Later that evening, Debbie, Danny, Chris, Jenny and Kenny all ate spaghetti with meatballs.

Mike and Rascal watched from the back porch while he heard his family laughing and talking while they ate dinner. Mike felt left out and his eyes watered.

Then later that night, Mike and Rascal lay on the floor while Debbie, Chris and Jenny were a family on the couch and they watched the *Toy Story* DVD.

Danny was out on the back porch. He had an important business call on his cell phone.

A few minutes later, Danny came back into the living room from the porch. He looked happy while she sat down next to Debbie on the couch.

“Is everything okay?” Debbie asked him.

“Yeah, we’ll talk about it later,” Danny said then returned to watching the movie.

Mike looked ever so sad when he saw Danny place his arm around Debbie’s shoulder and she snuggled up next to him.

Mike looked at Danny’s sneakers and he got a smirk remembering the second present he left in the other sneaker.

Later that night, Danny was at the door kissing Debbie good-night.

Mike watched from the hallway archway. "I'm sorry one of the dogs used your shoes, as a bathroom again."

"It happens. Anyway, I can't wait until we get married!" he said then paused. "My call earlier was from my boss. They're promoting me and I'm being transferred to Seattle with a thirty percent raise," Danny told Debbie.

Debbie did not look too enthused with moving to Seattle.

"You're going to love living in Seattle," he said with a loving smile to make her feel better.

Debbie was not too sure but knew having all that extra money would be nice.

Mike's ears perk up. "I can't live there. It's always raining in Seattle," Mike quietly said.

"So, why don't I spend the night?" Danny offered with a kiss on her neck.

"Now, now, our honeymoon will be in three days, so you can wait," she replied and gave him a quick kiss on his lips. "The kids are going to love Disney World," she added.

"And it's nice of Kenny to watch the dogs. Speaking of which, we only have room for one dog at the condo my company's providing in Seattle. We'll keep Rascal, as I don't think

Buster likes me,” Danny said.

Debbie thought about his comment for a second. “I’ll talk with Kenny. He might take him,” she said.

Then Danny’s eyes lit up. “Oh, I forgot to give Jenny a good night kiss,” he said.

“You’re so sweet. Mike would never do that to her,” she said.

“I don’t know why, she’s such a doll,” he replied then rushed away.

Mike followed him while he walked into Jenny’s bedroom and gave her a good night kiss.

“I love you,” Jenny replied.

“I love you too,” Danny replied then walked out of her room.

Mike followed Danny while he walked into Chris’ bedroom.

“Good night buddy,” he said to Chris.

“Good night,” Chris replied while he played with his Wii game.

Mike followed Danny back down the hallway and watched while Debbie and him kissed one last time for the night.

Debbie let him out of the house then she walked through the living room and didn’t pay any attention to Mike because she had Danny on her mind.

Mike watched while Debbie walked down the hallway to their bedroom.

“I can't let him steal my family away from me!” Mike quietly said and looked determined.

It was 2:00 a.m. and Mike paced around the living room in the dark while he pondered his dilemma.

He rushed out of the living room and went down the hallway.

He rushed into Jenny's bedroom and saw Rascal asleep at the foot of her bed.

“Rascal. Wake up,” Mike quietly said an inch from Rascal's ear.

Rascal slowly opened his eyes, and saw Mike staring at him. “What?”

“We need to talk in the living room, now!” Mike said then rushed out of Jenny's room.

Rascal got off the floor and slowly walked out of the bedroom.

Mike paced around the living room while Rascal entered. Rascal sat down on the floor and yawned.

Mike paced around the room.

“What's so important to interrupt a good

dream of me in a field of rawhide chew bones?" Rascal said then yawned again.

"I can't stand watching Danny take my place as the man of the house. I really need to find a way to become human again," Mike said.

"I don't have a clue on how to do that," Rascal replied then yawned.

"I do. First we find out where that Voodoo lady moved. She must have a spell to reverse everything. I hope she didn't move to another state," Mike said.

"I don't want her turning me into a frog if she catches us. I remember her and she was spooky!" Rascal said and looked worried.

"Rascal, I know it's strange for me to say this, but I can't do it without you. I only have three days. So please help me!" Mike pleaded.

Rascal thought for a second. "Okay, I can't leave a friend that needs help," he said.

"Thanks buddy. We'll start first thing in the morning," Mike said and looked determined. "Now go get some sleep," he added then he looked saw that Rascal was already on the floor sound asleep.

Chapter 15

It was at the next morning and Debbie, Jenny, Chris and Danny went off to church and then lunch afterwards.

Mike and Rascal sat in his backyard and stared at Louise's old house, which was now the Cooper home.

“That poodle will eventually have to go to the bathroom,” Mike told Rascal while they waited and stared at the back of the Cooper house.

An hour later, Mike and Rascal were about to give up when they heard the screen door to the back porch of the Cooper house open.

They soon saw Mrs. Cooper, talking into her cell phone, while she held the screen door open while Napoleon walked into the backyard. Mrs. Cooper went back inside the house.

Mike watched while Napoleon finished his backyard business. “Hey buddy. I need to talk to you,” Mike called out to Napoleon while he walked over to his property line. Rascal

followed behind Mike.

Napoleon walked over to Mike and Rascal.

“I’m Mike and my friend here is Rascal,” Mike said.

“I’m Napoleon, what do you need?” he answered in a French accent.

“The big dog that use to live in your house,” Mike replied.

“Do you mean Boodro?” Napoleon quickly replied.

“Yeah, him. Do you know where he moved?” Mike responded.

Napoleon thought for a few seconds. “Somewhere around here, as I remembered my master driving over to his house to drop off something his master left in our house. But I don’t remember exactly where,” Napoleon said then he thought for a few seconds. “It was somewhere over in that direction,” Napoleon pointed at the direction of their front yard with his nose.

“Thanks buddy,” Mike said.

Mrs. Cooper opened the screen door of the back porch and saw Napoleon with Mike and Rascal, and she frowned. “Get away from those dogs Napoleon, you might catch fleas, worms or

some other type of disease!” she yelled at her poodle.

“I better go. Good luck with finding that mean dog,” Napoleon quickly said then he turned around and ran back to his back porch.

“Disease? I don't have fleas, worms or some other type of disease,” Mike said while he watched Napoleon go inside his back porch. Then his eyes widened. “Wait. That sounds familiar. Oh yeah, that's my line,” he added and felt a little ashamed.

“Let's go,” Mike told Rascal while he got up and walked back to his side yard.

Rascal followed Mike.

“What's next?” Rascal asked curiously while they headed to the front yard.

“We roam the streets and find her house,” Mike replied.

Mike and Rascal walked through the front yard.

Mike stopped on his sidewalk and looked up and down his Kiscoe Avenue. “We'll start in that direction and walk around until we hopefully see Boodro,” Mike told Rascal.

Mike and Rascal ran headed left to the end of Kiscoe then turned right and ran down

Fay Avenue. They looked at all the homes on both sides of the street and didn't see any signs of Boodro.

Mike and Rascal turned right and ran down Ember Avenue. They looked at all the homes on both sides of the street and didn't see Boodro.

Mike and Rascal turned to the left and ran down Dock Avenue. They looked at all the homes on both sides of the street and didn't see Boodro.

Mike and Rascal turned right and ran down Peabody Avenue. They looked at all the homes on both sides of the street then Mike suddenly stopped. He sat in the street and looked depressed. "He's not around here," he said.

"Don't give up. We'll find him," Rascal said while he placed a paw on Mike's shoulder for comfort.

"Let's head back to the house," Mike said then he got up.

They walked off down Peabody.

An old eighty-year-old snoop of an old lady peeked out her living room windows. Her eyes widened when she saw Mike and Rascal

walking down her street. She quickly ran to her phone in her kitchen and called the dog pound.

Mike and Rascal ran down the streets and eventually got back to Fay Avenue.

They headed down Fay.

Then Rascal's eyes widened while they walked down Fay. "It's Ginger!" he cried out in joy then ran down the street.

Mike looked and saw Ginger while she sat on the sidewalk two houses down from them.

Ginger looked and saw Rascal running over to her and saw Mike lag behind.

"Mike! I thought I'd never see you again. Hi Rascal. Are you guys back on the streets?" she asked curiously.

"No, we're looking for someone," Mike responded while he walked up to her.

"His name is Boodro. And he's big mean Cajun dog," Rascal replied while he sat down next to Ginger.

Mike walked over and sat down by Ginger's other side. He noticed her bandage fell off but her wound from the dogfight but it looked all right.

Ginger thought for a few seconds while she recalled all the dogs she encountered while she roamed around this neighborhood. Then her

eyes lit up when she remembered. “I know that name. I remember this weird spooky looking human lady walking him down a nearby street. He wanted to me to marry him. In his dreams maybe!” she replied.

Mike’s eyes widened with hope. “Do you know where they live?” he asked.

“Yeah,” she replied.

Mike licked the side of Ginger’s face. “You’re the best!”

Ginger loved Mike’s kisses.

“Great, can you show me?” he asked her.

“My pleasure, she replied then got up.

Ginger ran down Fay Avenue in the opposite direction from Mike’s home.

Mike and Rascal ran after her.

They ran past numerous streets then Ginger turned right down Jumper Avenue.

She ran down Jumper Avenue.

Mike and Rascal ran after her.

She stopped halfway down the street where there was a light purple painted house.

“Right there,” Ginger said while she sat down on the sidewalk and Mike and Rascal joined her.

Mike looked at the purple house. “Yep, that’s her color!”

“Get away from my house!” Boodro yelled while he looked out his living room window.

“Yep, that’s the house,” Mike said while he saw Boodro’s large head in the living room window yelling at them. Then Boodro went away from the window.

“Why are you interested in his spooky place?” Ginger asked Mike.

Mike got up and walked back to the street.

Ginger and Rascal followed.

“Boodro’s owner used some kind of Voodoo potion on me that turned me into a dog. I believe she has a potion to reverse it. We just have to get inside her house,” Mike told them.

“That’s easier said than done,” Ginger replied while she remembered past encounters with Boodro.

“You better stay off my property!” Boodro’s voice was heard behind them but this time, it was louder.

Ginger, Mike and Rascal looked a little concerned when they heard his voice. They slowly turned around and saw Boodro standing in the street ten feet from them.

“Oh no!” Ginger said with a concerned

look.

Then Mike looked happy when he saw the Dog Pound truck drive up and stop six feet behind Boodro.

“I’ll eat you alive if you step one paw into my home!” Boodro yelled at them and growled with drool dripping out of his mouth.

Ginger, Mike and Rascal watched while Dog Catchers, Ernie and Peter, get out and rushed over to the side of their truck and quickly removed two long snare poles.

Ginger, Mike and Rascal stuck out their tongues at Boodro to taunt him while Ernie and Peter both quietly inched their way to Boodro.

Then the two snares were quickly dropped around Boodro’s neck the second he lunged at Ginger, Mike and Rascal.

Boodro brought Ernie and Peter down to the street but they still clung onto their poles. Boodro slowly dragged them down the street while he tried to get at Mike, Ginger and Rascal. They were quickly able to get up and used all their strength to stop Boodro while he clawed his way down the street after Ginger, Mike and Rascal.

“We better git!” Ginger said knowing the Dog Catchers would come after them.

Ginger, Mike and Rascal turned around and ran off down the street.

“You can run, but you can't hide from us, as we always get our dogs!” Peter yelled at the three dogs while they ran away.

“We'll be back!” Ernie yelled at the dogs.

The old man, Robbie, who lived three houses down the street mowed his front yard. He stopped his mower when he saw Boodro being dragged to their truck. He went back to mowing his yard with a smile.

Mike, Rascal and Ginger stopped at the end of the street and looked back. They saw Ernie and Peter drag Boodro to the rear of their truck.

“Great! My luck is finally getting better. We can sneak in her house tonight,” Mike told Ginger and Rascal.

“Come along with us Ginger,” Mike offered.

“Where we going?” she asked curiously.

“Home,” he replied.

Ginger loved hearing that word. “I would love to try a home again!” she replied with a sparkle in her eyes.

Mike and Rascal walked away, then Ginger followed.

Later that day, Mike, Rascal and Ginger walked to the back porch screen door.

“Are you sure I'm allowed inside?”

Ginger asked a little apprehensive.

“Of course, my wife will love you. Trust me,” Mike said then he went through the doggie door on the porch screen door and went into the porch.

Rascal went through the screen door doggie door and went into the porch.

Ginger went through the screen door doggie door and went into the porch.

Mike went through the screen door of the kitchen door and went into the kitchen.

In the kitchen, Mike waited while Rascal went through the doggie door of the kitchen. He watched while Ginger went through the doggie door.

Ginger looked in awe at the kitchen.

“Wow! I forgot what it's like to be in a home. It's so huge!” she said.

Debbie walked into the kitchen and Ginger got scared and shook a little in fear.

Debbie saw Ginger. “Well, did Buster bring a friend home?” she asked while she

walked up to Ginger.

“Buster? Your name is now Buster. How funny!” Ginger quietly said while she looked over at Mike and quietly snickered.

“Watch it!” Mike replied with a chuckle.

Debbie knelt down at Ginger who shied away.

“I won’t hurt you,” Debbie said while she held out her hand.

Ginger sniffed Debbie’s hand and felt safe.

Debbie petted Ginger’s head. “I’ll have Kenny take you to the shelter,” she said while she continued to pet Ginger’s head who loved it.

Debbie stood up when Jenny and Chris ran into the kitchen.

“A new doggie!” Jenny cried out all excited. “Let’s play!” she added.

“Whew! I’m off the hook for another tea party,” Rascal said with happy eyes.

Debbie looked at Ginger. “Let’s give the new dog a bath first,” Debbie said while she bend down and picked up Ginger.

Ginger didn’t have a clue what was a bath while Debbie carried her into the bathroom.

Thirty minutes later, Ginger had her bath.

“I never knew how good you can feel when you get one of those baths,” she told Mike in the kitchen while they ate some dog food.

“Plus you smell better,” Mike said while he munched on his food.

“I hate baths,” Rascal mumbled with a mouthful of dog food.

They finished their food while Jenny walked into the kitchen.

“Let’s play with our new doggie,” Jenny said while she bent down and picked up Ginger.

Debbie walked into the kitchen and saw Ginger in Jenny’s arms. “We need to give her a name,” Debbie said while she tried to think of one. Then she snapped her fingers when one came to mind. “Well call her Missy,” Debbie said.

Jenny’s eyes lit up. “I love Missy,” she said then hugged Ginger.

Mike snickered and Ginger who gave him a stern look.

“Come Missy, we need to have a tea party,” Jenny said when she walked out of the kitchen with Ginger in her arms.

Debbie walked out of the kitchen.

Mike and Rascal looked at each other then chuckled. “No more girly tea parties for

me!” Rascal said.

Mike and Rascal high-pawed each other.

“Let’s take a peek,” Rascal said.

“Okay,” Mike replied.

They walked out of the kitchen and walked down hallway.

They walked to Jenny’s bedroom and peeked inside. They both quietly chuckled while they saw Ginger at Jenny’s table.

Jenny just placed the wig on Ginger’s head. Then Jenny sat down and grabbed a small tea pot. She poured ice tea into two small tea cups. She grabbed the cup in front of Ginger and brought it to Ginger’s mouth.

“Drink Missy,” Jenny said.

Ginger wasn’t sure of the liquid in that cup. She smelled the ice tea and it smelled good. She licked up some tea and liked the taste. She slurped up the rest of it out of the cup.

Mike and Rascal walked away down the hallway.

Mike and Rascal walked into the living room and jumped up on the couch. Mike got up on the top of the couch and lay on the top of the back cushions. Rascal got on the seat cushions and curled up by the pillows at the couch arm near Mike.

“Get some rest for tonight,” Mike said while he closed his eyes.

Rascal closed his eyes.

They were soon fast asleep.

Later that evening, Ginger, Mike and Rascal ate their dinner in the kitchen.

Ginger gulped down her food then she burped. “Sorry. I’m not acting like a lady again,” she said then sat down and looked around the kitchen. “I could get use to living like this,” Ginger said with happy eyes.

Mike and Rascal finished their meal.

“Yeah, it sure beats living on the street,” Rascal said with happy eyes.

“This food isn’t the greatest, but it sure beats eating out of the garbage,” Mike said while he looked at Ginger and Rascal then remembered he’s still a dog. “Okay, we’ll slip out of the house once everybody goes to sleep. Let’s go get some rest,” Mike told everybody.

Ginger and Rascal nodded in agreement.

They all walked out of the kitchen.

Rascal went into Chris’ room and curled up at the base of his bed while Chris played a game on his Wii station.

Ginger went into Jenny’s room and

jumped up on her bed while Jenny read a book. “Come Missy. Let me read to you,” Jenny said while she grabbed Ginger and shoved her under the covers and made her comfy. *This is the life!* Ginger thought to herself while she loved the comfortable mattress.

Mike went into the living room where Debbie sat on the couch and watched *The Ugly Dachshund* movie.

Mike jumped up on the couch and curled up next to Debbie. She petted his head while she watched the movie. All he could think about was becoming a human again and loving his family.

Chapter 16

Late that night, Louise returned from her day trip to Pittsburgh.

She went all through her house in search of Boodro, and realized he wasn't there.

She looked in the backyard for Boodro, and realized he wasn't there.

A few minutes later, Louise rushed outside in sandals and bare feet and her cane.

She rushed down her driveway and headed to the street.

She rushed down her street. "Boodro!" she called out while she looked at all the front yards, and Boodro wasn't there.

Then Robbie walked out of his garage after he heard Louise. "Hello Miss LeBlanc. Are you looking for Boodro?" Robbie said.

"Yes I am." Louise snapped back in an unfriendly tone.

"I believe the dog catcher picked him up earlier today," Robbie broke the news to her.

Louise glared at Robbie and then stormed

off furious.

Robbie looked happy while he walked back to his garage, as he was not fond of Louise and Boodro.

A little while later, Louise drove her old rusty Dodge Dart to the front entrance of the Dog Pound. She parked her car and stormed to the front entrance. She saw the “Closed” sign in the door window. She got mad and kicked the door. She heard numerous dogs bark inside the pound. Then saw the “Joe Smithson – Manager” sign on the wall next to the door.

She stormed back to her car.

Back at Mike’s house, everybody was busy and Mike, Ginger and Rascal pretended to be asleep on the back porch.

Mike looked up and eyed the kitchen door window and saw that the lights were off in the kitchen.

“Let’s go!” Mike quietly told Ginger and Rascal.

They all got up and took turns sneaking through the doggie door on the screen door.

Mike, Ginger and Rascal ran through the

side yard then headed to the front yard.

They ran through the front yard and headed to the street.

They raced down Kiscoe Avenue.

Meanwhile, Louise whipped her car into the driveway of Joe Smithson's home.

She quickly got out of her car and left her door open while she stormed up to Joe's front door. She banged on it with her cane! She waited for a few seconds and nobody answered her knocking. She banged and banged on the door again with her cane.

The door slowly opened and Joe appeared sleepy, his hair was a mess, and he was in his pajamas. "What is the emergency?" Joe yelled then yawned.

"You have my dog and I want him back!" Louise demanded.

"What dog?" Joe replied a little confused.

"His name is Boodro. Your stupid employees picked him up earlier today," she yelled.

"We open up at nine o'clock in the morning," he replied then close his door.

She got furious and beat on his door with her cane. "You didn't hear me. I want Boodro!

And I want him now!” she yelled while she rapidly beat her cane on his door.

Joe opened the door. “Like I said, we open up at nine in the morning,” he yelled back.

Louise gave Joe the scariest evil look and it spooked him then he feared for his life.

“Ah, yes ma'am. I can get him for you. Let me grab my car keys,” Joe said like he was in some type of hypnotic trance.

“We go now!” she yelled while she reached inside his house and grabbed his pajama top and yanked him outside.

She escorted him to her Dodge Dart while she still held onto the top of his pajamas.

At the rear of Louise’s house, Mike, Ginger and Rascal looked at the back porch that had a bigger doggie door in the porch screen door.

“Are you still with me?” Mike asked them to double check.

“Of course,” Ginger replied.

“You bet, I would never let you down,” Rascal added.

Mike felt proud of his friends.

“Let’s do it,” Mike said while he went through the doggie door.

Ginger went through the doggie door.
Rascal went through the doggie door.

A little while later, they all went through another doggie door and went into the kitchen.

They stood in the kitchen and listened for the sound of Louise. They listened for a few seconds and it was quiet.

“Great! She’s not here,” Mike told them.

Back at the Dog Pound, Louise waited while Joe brought Boodro out of his cage.

Joe walked Louise and Boodro out of the building and walked with them to her car.

Louise put Boodro in the backseat then she got behind the wheel. She closed her door and started her engine.

Joe rushed around to the passenger side. Then just as he touched the door handle, Louise threw the car in drive and drove off leaving Joe stranded. She laughed an evil laugh while she pulled her car onto the street and drove away.

Joe went back into the building to call his wife for a ride home.

Back inside Louise’s home, Mike, Ginger and Rascal walked down the dark hallway.

“She probably has her Voodoo items in a den or separate bedroom,” Mike told them.

They peeked into a bedroom and didn’t see any Voodoo items.

They walked down to another room and peeked inside, and they saw all kinds of weird Voodoo items.

“This looks like the place,” Mike said.

They went inside the room.

Mike looked around the room while Ginger and Rascal just sat down and were clueless.

Mike saw a bookcase at one end of the room filled with books and numerous labeled bottles of strange looking liquid.

Then at the second bookshelf, Mike saw a big thick "Complete Books on Spells" book.

“That book might have the potion I need,” he said while he stood up on his hind paws. He clawed at that book and finally a claw caught the top of the binding. Mike pulled on the book and it fell out of the shelf and landed on the floor.

He used a paw to open the book. He flipped over a couple of pages and found the Table of Contents. He looked at it and found a

chapter of interest. He used his claws and flipped numerous pages over until he found the chapter he needed. He then flipped a couple of pages over and his eyes lit up with joy.

“I found it!” he cried out, while he wagged his tail.

Mike jumped up and down and wagged his tail. “I’m going to be a human again!” he cried out all excited.

Mike went back to the book, and looked at it. He looked at the bottles on a lower shelf. “Great, she has all the ingredients,” he said then looked around the room. “But we need something to carry it out of here,” he added. Then Mike saw a cloth shopping bag with strap handles at the other end of the room.

He ran over and grabbed the handles with his mouth. Ginger and Rascal watched while he dragged the bag over to the book.

He looked at the book then at the bottom bookshelf that contained numerous four ounce bottles of strange colored liquids with a cork top.

He clawed at a bottle filled with purple liquid. The bottle fell to the floor. Mike rolled the bottle with his paw to the cloth bag. He pushed the bottle with his paw into the bag.

Mike repeated this process for five other

bottles with yellow, green, bright red, orange and white liquids.

He pushed the book over to the bag with his nose and eventually slid it into the cloth bag.

“We better git,” Mike told Ginger and Rascal.

Louise and Boodro entered the living room through the front door.

Boodro stopped and sniffed the air, and he growled, as there were some smells he didn't like.

In that Voodoo room, Mike grabbed the straps of the cloth bag. He pulled the bag to the door with his teeth. Ginger and Rascal followed Mike.

Mike dragged the cloth bag into the hallway. Ginger and Rascal followed Mike.

Mike suddenly stopped and he looked scared. Ginger and Rascal bumped into him. Then their eyes widen the second they saw Boodro in the hallway with Louise behind him.

“Why are you in our house?” Boodro asked in a mad tone. Then he growled and slobber dripped out of his mouth.

“You better get them Boodro, or I'll turn

you into a frog!” Louise threatened him.

Ginger whispered in Rascal's ear, and he nodded in agreement.

“And what does a big, ugly, smelly guy think he's going to do about it?” she yelled at Boodro.

“Yeah, you couldn't catch a three legged cat,” Rascal taunted Boodro.

Mike looked at his two friends like they were loony.

Then Ginger walked past Mike and up to Boodro and slapped him across his nose with her paw. She turned around and ran past Mike and headed down the hallway.

Boodro was a little dazed by Ginger's behavior then he got furious.

He charged past Mike and ran after Ginger.

Mike looked at Louise.

Rascal bolted after Louise and jumped on her right leg knocking her down to the floor.

“Get out of here Mike,” Rascal yelled at Mike while he jumped on Louise's chest.

Mike quickly dragged the cloth bag down the hallway and headed to the kitchen.

“You better not move if you know what's good for you!” Rascal threatened Louise then he

growled in her face.

Louise stood perfectly still and was scared of Rascal.

When Mike reached the kitchen, he heard numerous items breaking in the house while Boodro chased Ginger from room to room.

Rascal jumped off Louise and grabbed her cane with his mouth.

He dragged the cane into the kitchen where Mike just dragged the bag through the doggie door.

Rascal dragged the cane and hid it under the kitchen table.

He ran over and went through the doggie door.

Mike dragged the bag through the doggie door of the back porch.

Rascal rushed through the same doggie door.

Rascal grabbed the strap handles and helped Mike drag the cloth bag through Louise's yard.

They heard Boodro barking inside the house while they dragged the bag through the front yard.

The second they dragged the bag to the street, they heard Ginger yelp in pain from inside the house.

“I can't believe they did that for me,” Mike said while he looked at Louise's house.

“I know. She's one special and brave lady, but we can't help her now. We better get this thing home,” Rascal said then they picked up the pace and dragged the bag down the street.

Mike and Rascal finally dragged the cloth bag through his yard and to the back porch.

They barely got the bag through the doggie door of the screen door, but they succeeded.

Once they were both in the back porch, Mike dragged the cloth bag to the other end of the porch and dragged it under a chair where it was dark.

“It should be safe here until tonight,” he told Rascal.

“Why not now?” Rascal asked.

“The book said the spell has to be performed during the same time frame as the original spell. She had to have done it while everybody was asleep and I remembered falling

asleep after midnight. So we'll do this later tonight," Mike replied.

"Okay," Rascal said.

Mike walked over to the kitchen door and went through the doggie door.

Rascal went through the doggie door.

Debbie entered the kitchen and turned on the light. She saw Mike and Rascal sitting on the floor by the door.

"Where were you guys?" she asked them.

Mike and Rascal just wagged their tails for their response.

Debbie looked around the kitchen then peeked out into the back porch. "Where's Missy?" she asked.

Mike and Rascal looked sad and Debbie noticed.

"I think I understand. She's a street dog and doesn't like living in a home," she said while she bent down and gave Mike and Rascal a kiss on the tops of their heads.

"Let's go to sleep," she told them then walked out of the kitchen and turned off the light.

Mike and Rascal followed her out of the kitchen.

Rascal went into Jenny's room to sleep.

Mike went into Debbie's room to sleep on his old bed and he prayed this would be the last time he slept on his bed as a dog.

Back on Jumper Avenue, Ginger managed to escape from Boodro. She was in excruciating pain while she dragged her badly injured hind legs down the street and was determined to return to Mike's home. Boodro might have seriously injured her, but she left a bunch of good teeth marks in him as her calling card.

Chapter 17

It was later that night in the Hanson home and it was quiet.

Rascal sat on Jenny's bed and watched while she played with her dolls.

Some of Jenny's clothes were on a pile on her bed near Rascal, and they were ready to be placed in a suitcase.

In Chris' room he played a game on his Wii, while Mike sat on his bed and watched. Also on the bed was a pile of his clothes also ready to be placed in a suitcase.

Mike jumped off the bed and walked out of Chris' bedroom.

Mike walked down the hallway and went into Debbie's bedroom.

Mike looked so sad when he saw Debbie while she packed clothes into a suitcase then zipped it up. There were two other suitcases on the floor ready for Jenny and Chris.

She looked at her watch and looked a little worried.

Mike walked out of her bedroom.

Mike walked down the hallway and went inside the living room.

Danny relaxed in Mike's old lazy boy chair and watched the Seattle Mariners and Cleveland baseball game on ESPN.

Mike sat in the doorway and stared at Danny and knew he was losing his family to this man.

The doorbell rang.

Danny got up from the chair and went over to the front door. He opened it and outside was Debbie's parents both enjoying retirement.

"Hello Danny," Wendell said as soon as he and Dottie walked into the living room.

Wendell and Danny shook hands.

Mike looked at his old in-laws and remembered he didn't get along with them for some reason. *Probably my fault!* He thought in his head while he watched Dottie give Danny a hug.

Debbie rushed into the living room excited, as she knew they were supposed to arrive soon. "Mom! Dad!" Debbie said.

"Sorry we're late. We took a little nap when we got to our hotel room," Wendell told Debbie while he gave a hug.

Debbie gave Dottie a hug and kiss on her

cheek.

Jenny and Chris ran into the living room all excited.

“Grandma! Grandpa!” Jenny and Chris called out in unison.

Chris and Jenny hugged their grandparents.

Rascal walked over and sat next to Mike in the doorway.

“Who are these people?” Rascal asked Mike.

“Debbie’s mom and dad,” Mike replied.

Dottie and Wendell saw Mike and Rascal in the doorway.

“You got two dogs?” Dottie asked.

“I can imagine Mike's turning over in his grave at this moment knowing you have two dogs in his house,” Wendell replied.

“That's Buster and that's Rascal,” Debbie told her parents while she pointed out the dogs.

“I remember the cute picture of Rascal you sent me last year, Debbie. I'm glad you found him,” Dottie said while she walked up to Mike and Rascal. She petted Mike and Rascal on the tops of their heads.

“Kenny found Rascal and Mike at the dog pound and he rescued them,” Debbie replied.

“They're so sweet! Is Kenny here?”
Dottie asked while she looked around the room.

“No, he's running late and I'm getting worried,” Debbie replied.

“I'm sure he'll be here before too long. Let's make some coffee and wait up for him,” Dottie said.

“Coffee sounds good!” Wendell said while he walked over and sat down on the couch while Danny sat down on the lazy boy chair.

Debbie and Dottie walked out of the living room and went into the kitchen.

Mike and Rascal followed them.

“Who's winning?” Wendell asked Danny while he saw the baseball game on the TV.

“Mariners, six to nothing,” Danny replied.

They continued to watch the game while Debbie and Dottie made a fresh pot of coffee.

“How's work Danny?” Wendell asked.

“Great. I'm being transferred to our Seattle office with a huge pay raise,” Danny replied and looked excited about this.

“Debbie did not tell us you might be moving after the wedding,” Wendell replied.

“I just got the news,” Danny replied.

Mike motioned at Rascal that they should

go outside.

Rascal nodded in agreement.

Mike went through the kitchen doggie door.

Rascal went through the kitchen doggie door.

They both went through the back porch doggie door and sat in the backyard.

“This doesn’t look good. They might stay up all night and chit chat,” Mike said while he paced around a little and looked back at the back porch.

“I wonder if Ginger is okay?” Rascal asked with a worried look.

“Well, we can’t go back to Boodro’s house to check up on her now,” Mike replied while he stopped pacing and looked back at the kitchen. “Let’s go back inside,” Mike told Rascal then he walked over and went through the doggie door.

Rascal went through the doggie door.

A toad was in the middle of the backyard and it slowly hopped toward the house.

Mike and Rascal went through the other

doggie door and entered the kitchen while Debbie and Dottie poured coffee into four cups.

Mike and Rascal followed them while they carried the cups into the living room.

An hour later, they were finished drinking their coffee and the baseball game was over, and the Mariners won.

The doorbell rang in the living room.

Debbie got up with a smile and opened up the front door.

Kenny walked into the living room and looked sad. "I'm sorry I'm late. I found a stray dog laying in the street a few houses from here. It looks like she got in a dogfight and was hurt bad. I took her to the emergency animal hospital, but she died," Kenny told everybody with sadness in his eyes.

"That's a shame," Debbie said.

Wendell and Dottie stood up and walked over and gave Kenny a hug.

"Hi mom. Hi dad," he greeted them and gave Dottie a hug and Wendell a hug.

Mike's ears perked up and he looked at Rascal. Both of their eyes welled up as they knew Ginger was the dog Kenny talked about.

"Sis, everything's in place for the

wedding tomorrow,” Kenny told her.

“Thanks buddy,” Danny told Kenny.

Mike motioned for Rascal to follow him out of the room.

They walked into the kitchen while Kenny sat down on the couch with Debbie and his parents.

After they both went through the doggie doors, Mike and Rascal sat in the backyard.

Mike wiped away a tear from his eyes with a paw. “I can’t believe she sacrificed herself for me,” he said while his voice got choked up.

“She was a very special dog,” Rascal added while his eyes welled up.

“It's my fault she's dead. I deserve to remain a dog for the rest of my life. Especially with the way I treated dogs when I was a human,” Mike replied while tears dripped into the grass.

“I came in this world as a dog and I'll leave a dog. You came in this world as a human and you should leave as a human. It's your destiny. So after they go to sleep, we'll correct your destiny,” Rascal said with a determined look.

“You are truly man's best friend,” Mike said while he placed a paw on the back of Rascal’s neck.

“That's my destiny.” Rascal responded.

“I think I know what mine is,” he said while he looked at his home.

Mike and Rascal high-paw each other, then they walked back to the back porch.

Mike and Rascal lay in the back porch and waited until everybody went to sleep.

Hours later, Mike and Rascal pretended to sleep in the back porch.

The kitchen light came on while Debbie and Kenny entered looking for the two dogs.

Kenny peeked into the back porch through the window of the kitchen door. “Here they are,” he quietly told Debbie.

She walked over and saw Mike and Rascal asleep on the back porch.

“They look too peaceful to wake up,” Kenny told her.

She nodded in agreement. “They’ll be fine out there. We better get some sleep,” she said.

Debbie turned off the kitchen light while they walked out of the kitchen.

From the back porch, Mike popped his head up and looked at the window in the kitchen door and saw it was dark inside the house.

Mike waited thirty minutes then he sat up when he saw the house still appeared dark and quiet inside.

“The coast is clear,” he said while he nudged Rascal who was actually asleep.

Rascal sat up and yawned while he watched Mike walk over and grab the straps of the cloth bag with his teeth. He dragged the cloth bag out from under the chair.

“Rascal, see that switch on the wall next to the door?” he said.

Rascal looked up at the wall by the door. “Yeah,” he replied.

“Jump up and see if you can flip the switch up so I can have some light,” Mike said.

“Got it,” Rascal said then walked over to the wall and stood under the switch.

He jumped up and tried to hit the switch with his nose, and he missed. He tried to hit the switch again, and he missed. He tried to hit the

switch again, and he missed. He tried to it the switch again, and bingo there was light in the back porch.

Mike dragged the cloth bag over to the kitchen door to be under the light near the two water bowls that Debbie placed on the porch for the two dogs.

Mike stuck his nose inside the bag and grabbed a corner of the book with his teeth. He dragged the book out of the bag. He opened up the book with one of his paws and flipped to the page with the needed potion.

Mike then grabbed one corner of the bottom of the bag and he raised it until all the bottles fell out of the bag and rolled on the back porch floor.

Meanwhile, Louise walked with her cane down Fay Avenue along with Boodro who limped from a bite Ginger gave him during their earlier fight.

“Some watch dog you are to let those other two little dogs escape with my belongings,” she scolded Boodro while she walked down the street and searched the homes for signs of those two dogs.

“I’m sorry,” Boodro replied while he

hung his head down in shame.

They turned and walked down Kiscoe Avenue.

Back on Mike's back porch, he pulled out the cork tops of the bottles and poured the liquid of all the bottles into one the water bowls Debbie placed outside. He stirred the liquid with his paw. He glanced over at the book. "It now states that I have to drink half of this stuff," he said while he read over the potion recipe. He slurped up half of the liquid in the bowl then had a sour look on his face. "This potion tastes awful!" he cried out and had some dry heaves. Then he burped while he looked at the recipe again. "It states I need to be at the exact place I originally was when I had the other potion," he read.

Mike thought for a second. "I slept on the couch," Mike remembered.

He rushed through the kitchen doggie door.

Rascal rushed through the kitchen doggie door after Mike.

Mike rushed through the kitchen and into the living room.

He screeched to a stop when he saw Danny sleeping on the couch.

“What am I going to do now? He’s sleeping on the couch,” Mike said and looked worried.

Then thunder was heard outside the house.

Rascal looked at Danny on the couch and pondered how he could help.

Meanwhile, Louise and Boodro stood on the sidewalk in front of Mike’s house. “I knew there was something familiar about that dog!” she said with hatred in her eyes when she stared at Mike’s house.

She rushed through Mike’s front yard and headed to his backyard.

Boodro followed her through the yard.

Louise rushed over to Mike’s back porch and peeked inside through the screen. She saw her Voodoo bottles and book on the back porch floor. “He won’t get away with this!” she said while she gritted her teeth. She waved her hand over the handle of the back porch screen door and it unlocked. “Come and you better not mess up this again!” she told Boodro with a threatening tone.

She opened the screen door and stepped inside the back porch with Boodro. She also didn't notice the toad that followed them into the porch.

Louise walked up to her Voodoo items and looked pissed when she saw that her bottle was empty. She picked up her book and placed it inside the cloth bag.

The toad jumped into the water bowl of Voodoo potion.

Then Boodro accidentally stepped into the bowl. He dumped the rest of the liquid onto Louise's toes that stuck out from her sandals. She was too mad to notice, and then she waved her hand across the door handle of the kitchen door and it unlocked.

She opened the door and quietly stepped inside Mike's kitchen. Boodro and the toad followed her through the door.

Louise and Boodro quietly walked through the kitchen and she saw Mike and Rascal while they sat and looked at Danny sleeping on the couch.

"You're now going to get what's coming to you," Boodro quietly said to Mike and Rascal

while he inched his way behind them.

Mike and Rascal's eyes widen with fear, and turned around and saw Boodro about three feet away with Louise.

“This isn't your territory!” Mike told Boodro.

“No, but that book and other items belong in our territory,” Boodro replied while he snarled at Mike and Rascal.

The thunder got louder outside and lighting was also visible from the living room window.

“I can't believe this!” Mike said worried that he wouldn't get his chance. “I need to get on that couch without Danny being there,” he told Rascal.

Rascal looked at Danny then had an idea. He quickly ran over and jumped on Danny's tummy. “Burglars! Burglars! Burglars!” he repeatedly yelled inches from Danny's face.

Danny jumped up out startled out of his sleep when he heard a dog barking.

Danny saw Louise and Boodro and jumped off the couch and caused Rascal to drop to the floor.

“What are you doing in this house?” he yelled at Louise.

Rascal quickly jumped up and ran after Boodro who was in position to fight.

Mike saw the opportunity and he ran over and jumped up on the couch.

Rascal slapped Boodro across his nose with a paw to give Mike some more time.

“What’s with this slapping stuff?” Boodro asked and looked mad.

Rascal ran between Louise the second Boodro lunged at Louise.

Boodro knocked Louise down and he landed on top of him.

Debbie and the kids ran into the living room when they heard the barking and commotion.

“Louise, what are you doing in my house?” Debbie asked concerned when she saw Louise on the floor with Boodro on top of her.

“Your dog got inside my house and stole something of value. He must pay!” Louise replied.

“My dog stole something from your house? That’s a joke. I think you better leave!” Debbie threatened Louise.

Danny ran over to Debbie and the kids to protect them from Louise and Boodro.

The toad jumped on Louise’s feet the

second she realized some of that potion was on her feet and Boodro's paw. "No!" she cried out the split second more severe lightning was visible from the living room window.

A bolt of lightning came through the living room window and splintered into two bolts.

One bolt of lightning struck Mike, and the other bolt splintered into three bolts with one striking Louise, one striking Boodro and the third one striking the toad.

Debbie, Danny and the kids watched in shock while Mike, Louise, Boodro and the toad all glowed.

Chapter 18

Time raced backwards to a year ago.

It was inside a hospital room and the beeps of monitoring equipment were heard.

Mike was back to being a human again while he lay in a hospital bed in a coma hooked up to monitoring equipment.

His eyes opened, and a piece of equipment made a louder beep.

In the waiting area, Debbie, Kenny, Chris, and Jenny sat and looked worried sick that Mike might be gone forever.

Doctor Winston entered and walked up to Debbie, who stood up and trembled a little. “How long will he be in a coma?” she asked.

“It's hard to tell. It could be weeks or it could be years,” Doctor Winston told her with concerned eyes.

Debbie's eyes welled up fearing the worst would happen to Mike.

Doctor Winston placed a hand on her shoulder for comfort.

Nurse Betty rushed inside. “Doctor, Mister Hanson just came out of his coma,” she called out then rushed back out of the waiting area.

“Or it could be now,” Doctor Winston said while he turned around and rushed out of the waiting area.

Debbie, Kenny, Chris and Jenny rushed out after the doctor.

In Mike’s hospital room, he was groggy and dazed while he looked around the room to figure out where he was located. He saw the monitoring equipment, and then he looked down and saw his human hands. A huge grin formed when he realized he was a human again.

The door to his room slammed open.

Doctor Winston, Nurse Betty, Debbie, Kenny, Chris and Jenny rushed inside.

Mike saw his family rush into the room, and his eyes welled up at the sight of his family.

Debbie rushed over to Mike's side.

Mike! I thought I was going to lose you forever,” Debbie softly said while tear rolled down her cheek.

“What happened?” Mike replied while he pretended to play ignorant.

“You were sleeping on the couch last week and got struck by lightning,” Debbie replied.

“Oh yeah, lightning. What a beautiful phenomenon!” Mike responded with a smile remembering he was a dog just before being struck by all that electricity.

Everybody in the room looked baffled with Mike’s response.

A week passed and Mike was released from the hospital.

On the way home, Debbie listened to Mike’s request and drove by his construction site.

Mike looked out his window and smiled when he saw the “Hanson’s Construction” sign was still intact on his office trailer.

“Why would you think it wouldn't be there?” she curiously asked while she drove down the road away from the site.

“Just verifying things are where they should be,” Mike replied with a smile.

Debbie looked worried with Mike and wondered if that lightning bolt damaged his brain.

Debbie drove Mike home where he relaxed for the rest of the day.

The next day, Mike sat on their couch and turned around and peeked out the window curtains.

Thirty minutes later, Debbie entered and saw Mike and got concerned. “Are you okay? You've been staring out that window for a while,” she said while she sat down and held his hand.

“I'm going for a drive,” Mike said then he leaned over and gave her a kiss on her cheek.

“The doctor said you should rest for a couple of weeks,” she replied and looked concerned with Mike's well being.

“There are a few loose ends I need to clean up. I'll be okay,” Mike said while he stood up and walked out the front door.

Debbie peeked out the window curtains and looked worried while she watched Mike rush over to his pickup truck. She continued to watch while he started it up and backed down the driveway and drove off down their street.

Mike's pickup slowly drove down the

road and headed to his construction site.

He drove through the gate and slowly drove through all the streets and looked at all the homes.

He drove out of his construction site and looked disappointed.

A little while later, Mike drove down another street and stopped by Mamma's Great Cooking restaurant. He looked at the restaurant but realized it was closed.

A car horn blew behind him, as the driver was mad that Mike stopped in the road.

Mike drove his pickup truck away.

Mike drove around the streets of New Castle searching every inch of ground.

Then he drove past the dog pound where he remembered Rascal and himself were once held prisoner.

Then his eyes widened when he remembered something Ginger once told him. He quickly stopped his pickup and backed up and was lucky traffic wasn't behind him.

He pulled his pickup into the parking lot of the dog pound and parked.

He rushed to the front door of the pound.

Mike rushed through the front doors of the pound and rushed up to Joe Smithson who sat behind his desk.

“I’m looking for a reddish haired terrier mix female mutt,” Mike said with hopeful eyes.

Joe thought for a few seconds. “We picked up dog that looks like that a week ago. She’s slated to be put to sleep,” Joe replied.

“I’ll pay what ever it cost to save her. She’s a family pet and my kids will be devastated,” Mike quickly replied while he removed his credit card from his wallet.

“Follow me,” Joe responded while he jumped up from his chair, as he had a soft heart for kids that loved their pets.

Joe walked over and went through a door.

Mike followed Joe through the door.

Joe rushed down the hallway and rushed into an examination room.

“Stop!” Mike screamed out when he saw the veterinarian with a needle inches away from Ginger’s body. The female veterinarian jumped a mile and dropped the needle and it bounced on the floor.

Mike smiled knowing he saved Ginger’s life.

Ginger looked up and saw Mike and she looked intimidated by him, as she remembered his treatment of her at his construction site.

A little while later, Mike drove out of an Arby's restaurant.

While Mike drove his pickup down the street, Ginger sat in the passenger seat and she gobbled up the roast beef from an Arby's that Mike bought.

"We need to find someone else," Mike told Ginger and smiled while he watched her eat the sandwich.

Ginger looked up at Mike. "He's giving me food? I must be dreaming," she quietly said to herself while she returned to munching on her roast beef.

Mike scanned the street while he drove.

A little while later, Mike slowly drove his pickup truck around another residential area and searched the area over.

Ginger had her front paws on the passenger windowsill and stuck her head out the window and loved the wind through her face.

A little while later, Mike slowly drove his

pickup down another residential street and Ginger still had her head out the window.

Then Mike slowly down another street and drove past a street perpendicular to his right, where he spotted the dog pound truck that was parked along the curb.

Then Mike saw Rascal, still a puppy he dumped off in the woods a few weeks ago, while he ran toward his truck while Ernie, the Dog Catcher, chased after him.

Mike stopped his pickup and got out and he waited.

Rascal turned and ran down the street then he unknowingly ran into Mike's opened arms.

Rascal looked stunned when he realized he was in Mike's arms and figured his days were truly numbered.

Mike rushed to his pickup and placed Rascal inside. He got in and quickly drove away.

Ernie huffed and puffed while he ran to that street and looked around for Rascal. He looked baffled. "Where did that mutt go?" he said while he searched the area over.

He turned around and walked back to his truck disappointed that a stray dog got the best of

him.

Mike drove away down the street happy that he completed his mission. He looked at the two dogs.

“Ginger, meet Rascal. Rascal, meet Ginger,” he said.

“Hi,” Ginger said to Rascal.

“Hi. Are you going to live with us?” Rascal asked her when he realized Mike was taking him back home.

“I guess so,” she replied then looked at Mike and wondered how he knew her name. She shrugged it off; as she didn’t care because she knew in her heart she was finally going to get off the streets.

Mike turned his pickup right down another street so he could head home.

Then halfway down the street he saw another familiar sight down a perpendicular street. He saw Howard while he moped down another street.

Mike stopped his pickup truck and rolled down his window. “Hey Howard!” Mike yelled out his window.

Ginger’s head snapped around when she heard that familiar name. “Howard!” she called

out the second she saw Howard down that perpendicular street.

Howard turned around and saw Mike in his pickup truck.

“Ah, yeah,” Howard replied a little apprehensive of Mike as he remembered how he was treated.

“If you want a job as a laborer, come by the Hanson construction site over at,” Mike called out.

“I know where it is and I would love a job,” Howard quickly interrupted Mike so happy he might have finally found work.

Howard rushed over to Mike’s truck all excited.

“Great. Come by tomorrow,” Mike replied with a warm smile. Then his eyes widened with an idea and he removed his wallet. Mike opened it and took out eighty dollars, and he handed it to Howard. “Go buy some fresh clothes and it’s on me,” Mike said.

Howard couldn’t believe Mike’s generosity and took the money. “Bless you sir,” he called out to Mike while his eyes welled up.

Mike rolled up his window and drove off.

Howard waved goodbye while Mike drove his pickup away.

“Good for Howard,” Ginger quietly said while she looked at Mike.

A little while later at his home, Mike walked through the front door and entered the living room with Ginger and Rascal behind him.

“Jenny! Chris! I have a surprise for you,” Mike called out.

Debbie rushed into the living room. “Where were you? I was scared,” she quickly said then looked stunned when she saw the two dogs.

Rascal’s tail wagged the second he saw Debbie and ran up to her.

“Rascal!” Debbie cried out and knelt down where Rascal immediately jumped up and licked her face.

Jenny and Chris ran into the living room curiously and their eyes lit up the second they saw Rascal.

“Rascal!” they both cried out in joy and rushed over to him.

Rascal wagged his tail and immediately jumped up and licked Jenny and Chris’ face.

They both hugged him.

Debbie stood up and looked a little bewildered at Mike. “You found Rascal! Why

the sudden change in heart?" she asked while she walked over to him.

"Let's say that lightning bolt made me see things a little clearer," he replied while Debbie gave him a kiss on his cheek to thank him for being so kind.

Debbie saw Ginger who hid behind Mike's legs. "You have another dog?"

"Yep. Her name is Ginger. She's a stray that needs a loving home for once in her life," Mike replied while he looked down at Ginger.

Debbie walked up to Ginger and petted her. "Hello Ginger and welcome to our home," she said with a warm smile.

Dreams can come true. Ginger thought in her head while Debbie petted her head.

Mike smiled while he watched Ginger and Rascal get all the loving attention he finally realized they deserved.

"Come on Rascal, let's go outside and play ball," Chris said.

Chris ran out of the living room and went down the hallway.

"Come on Ginger. "Let's go have a tea party," Jenny said.

Jenny ran out of the living room and went the hallway. Ginger followed and didn't have a

clue what was a tea party.

Debbie gave Mike a warm hug for being so sweet and kind.

Then Mike saw Chris and Rascal while they ran into the kitchen from the hallway.

“I’ll join you Chris,” Mike called out when Chris opened up the kitchen door. Then he looked at Debbie. “By the way honey, I was thinking, I want to know that if you want a jogging partner, I think I could stand to loose a few pounds,” he told her then walked away and headed toward the kitchen.

Debbie stared at Mike in disbelief with his sudden change. “Ah, sure,” she said and wondered if that bolt of lightning fried part of his brain; the mean part.

A couple of weeks had passed and Kenny stood outside his animal shelter and he watched while some construction workers framed out an addition to his shelter. Howard was also one of the workers and picked up trash. He was clean shaven and his hair was cut short and wore a new work shirt and a new pairs of blue jeans. He looked like a different person, and he looked so full of life again.

Mike drove up to the shelter in Debbie's mini-van and parked.

Debbie, Jenny and Chris in his Little League uniform got out with Mike.

They all walked over to Kenny.

"It's looking great Mike. Thanks for getting your guys to volunteer on their Saturday," Kenny said.

"My pleasure," Mike replied while he watched his workers.

Debbie placed her arms around Mike and rested her head on his shoulder loving her new man.

"Well, we have a little game to attend. I just wanted to stop by and check it out," Mike told Kenny. "It's coming along just fine," Mike said with a smile.

Debbie, Mike, Chris and Jenny headed back to the mini-van where Mike opened up the passenger door for Debbie.

Later that day, Debbie and Mike walked to their front door in jogging outfits.

"We'll be back in a while," Debbie called out to the kids who were playing with Ginger and Rascal in their bedrooms.

Mike and Debbie went out of the house.

Mike and Debbie walked through their front yard and headed to the street.

Once they got to the street, they took off in a slow jog.

A little while later, Debbie and Mike jogged down another street.

At that same street, two toads hopped along the curb.

Mike and Debbie jogged down that street and came upon the two toads.

They passed the toads where one toad was Louise and the other toad was Boodro.

“It's all your fault Boodro. It's going to take us years to get back home. And who knows if I can turn us back into humans again, since most of my special liquids have been used up by that mutt,” Louise the toad, yelled at Boodro the toad.

Boodro's ignored her as he spotted a fly. Then his tongue whipped out and he caught the fly and quickly ate it. “Mmmm!” Boodro the toad replied.

They continued to hop down the street.