

Sparky: Firehouse Dog

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Chapter 1

Sparky was the happiest Dalmatian puppy in the whole world. He had just been brought home from the pet store, and so far he was a big hit.

“He’s so cute!” Jimmy said, taking Sparky from his father’s hands.

“He’s adorable,” Jimmy’s mother said.

“Let me hold him,” Tina said, reaching out for him. Tina was Jimmy’s younger sister. She wore a pink bow in her hair.

The two children pulled on Sparky and, in the confusion, he slipped free. Sparky was so excited he could not hold still, even for a second, and he darted from one side of the kitchen to the other. Unfortunately, he didn’t realize how slippery the kitchen floor was and he slid into a cupboard with a loud crash.

Normally, he might have been hurt. Today, however, nothing could hurt him. He was too happy. He sprang to his feet and raced into the living room. Sleeping on the couch was a big, black cat with long whiskers. It snored loudly out of one side of its mouth. Sparky snuck up on it and yelped right in its ear. The cat screeched and jumped straight upward, its hair on end and its claws out. It landed on the coffee table and hissed loudly.

“Sparky!” Jimmy’s mother said. “You leave Panther alone, you silly puppy.”

Sparky scurried away as Jimmy reached out to get him. Normally, Sparky would have let the boy hold him, but not today. There was simply too much to see. This new house was a strange and wonderful place. It was much bigger than the pet shop he had lived at the day before.

He hurried into the den. Sitting next to the window was a glass tank with fish inside. He jumped on the chair next to the tank and peered inside. One fish was gold with elegant, flowing fins. A second fish was silver. A third was black, with bright, orange stripes and long whiskers.

It must be a catfish, Sparky thought, his eyes widening with interest.

He barked at it. Frightened, the catfish zipped across the tank and shook its tail. Water poured over the top of the tank and landed on the carpet below with a splash.

“Sparky!” Tina said.

Sparky hopped down and raced into the kitchen. He tried to stop and head another direction, but he had forgotten how slippery the floor was. He slid across the tiles into the waiting hands of Jimmy’s father.

“Why don’t you kids take Sparky out back for awhile?” Jimmy’s father said. “There’s a lot more room for him to play in the yard.”

Jimmy grabbed Sparky and hurried outside.

Sparky liked outside. The ground wasn’t nearly as slippery as in the kitchen. A bright, yellow butterfly flew by and Sparky chased after it, jumping high into the air to try to grab it. Unfortunately, no matter how hard he tried, the butterfly stayed just out of his reach.

“Catch this, Sparky,” Jimmy said, tossing a tennis ball at him.

Sparky stepped out of the way and watched the tennis ball roll by. It stopped in a flowerbed next to a rose bush.

“Get it, Sparky,” Jimmy said.

Why should I get it? Sparky thought. Jimmy was the silly one who had thrown it into the bushes. Why shouldn’t he go and get it?

Sparky hurried away and went into the tool shed at the side of the house. He sniffed

around, trying to find something of interest. Unfortunately, it was dark in the shed and he didn't see the rake that was laying on the floor until he stepped on it. The rake stood straight up and smacked him squarely on the snout. He jumped away, and the rake tipped back over. As it fell, it hit a shovel, which hit a pick, which hit a hoe, which hit a spade.

There was a terrible crash.

Sparky raced from the shed, yelping loudly, his tail between his legs. He hoped he didn't get in any trouble. He hadn't meant any harm.

Tina scooped him up and gave him a big hug. "You silly puppy," she said. "You sure are a handful. We're going to have to keep an eye on you at all times."

For the rest of the afternoon, they played with the tennis ball. It took Sparky awhile, but he got the hang of it. It was a game. Jimmy tossed the ball, and Sparky was supposed to chase it and bring it back -- the faster, the better. After awhile, Sparky started to really have fun. He even started to make up rules of his own. Instead of bringing the ball back, he would only bring it half way. Then, Jimmy would have to chase after him to get it. Once Jimmy started chasing him, the fun really began. They raced through the back yard, then into the front, then back to where they had originally started.

The day went quickly. In no time, it started to get dark and everyone headed inside for dinner. Sparky hid under the dining room table, and the kids snuck him scraps of food from their plates. Once, Jimmy's father even gave him some, a big piece of bread, but Jimmy's mother saw what he had done and scolded him for setting a bad example for the children. After that, she made Sparky go into the kitchen, which really wasn't that bad because Sparky had his own dish of food, and the dish had his name on its side in bright, blue letters.

By bedtime, Sparky was tired. Like all puppies, he loved to play, and when he played he

played hard, but as a result he needed a lot of rest. He curled up in his new wicker bed and made himself comfy on its plush pillows. This bed was much better than the newspaper he had slept on at the pet store.

Everyone wished him good night, turned off the lights, and went upstairs where they slept. Sparky could not believe how happy he was. He hoped he could stay with this family for the rest of his life.

In no time, he was sound asleep.