

Chapter 3

Grace came into the kitchen where her mother, Megan, was putting the evening meal on the gas stove.

“I think I have a way to take pictures of Mr. Mayo and his dog, Rascal,” said Grace with much enthusiasm in her voice.

“How are you going to take pictures with COVID restrictions?” asked her mother.

“Through the window,” replied Grace. “I can take Mr. Mayo’s picture through his living room window, and then I can add Rascal into the picture with my computer software,” Grace said with the sound of assurance in her voice.

“Can you do all that?” quizzed her mother.

“Sure, it is fairly easy to do on my computer,” replied Grace.

“Then give Mr. Mayo a call and make arrangements to go over to his house to do your photo shoot for next weekend,” replied her mother. “Either your father or I can drive you over to his house,” Megan continued.

After dinner, Grace took Kilo out for a run as part of her dryland training for swimming. As Grace ran on the streets of her neighborhood, she noticed something different about the people she saw. People were outside doing all sorts of activities, but no one was smiling. Some of the neighbors had their masks on as they walked, did lawn work, or played with their children. Those who had their masks off outside wore frowns. No one smiled. No one waved at Grace as she ran by. No one said hello. No one interacted with Grace and her running dog. People just seemed to be trapped behind their COVID masks whether they were wearing them or not.

As Grace turned the corner at the halfway point of her run, Kilo took off running after one of the neighbor’s cats. Kilo usually didn’t chase cats. Kilo couldn’t care one way or the other

about any of the cats in his neighborhood. But this was Mrs. Katze's white Persian cat named Snowball. Snowball would come by Grace's house every day and sit on the sidewalk in front of the house. Snowball would sit and wait for Kilo to come out so that she could tease him. Kilo was restricted to his yard by an invisible electric fence. Snowball would sit outside the fence's boundaries and bat at Kilo's nose when he came close. Snowball was safe as long as Kilo remained inside of his invisible fence.

Kilo was no longer imprisoned inside of his invisible fence. Kilo was off and running at full speed, chasing down the annoying cat. Snowball darted across the front of one of the neighbor's yards. The neighbor had just finished raking his entire yard into one big pile of leaves. Snowball shot through the leaves like there was a tunnel hidden in the middle of the pile. Kilo hit the leaves at full speed and blew the pile up. Leaves were floating in the air and landing all over the front yard. Mr. McCoy came out and started yelling at Kilo. When Mr. McCoy saw Grace trailing behind the runaway cat and dog, he shouted, "Hey, get that dog on a leash."

"Sorry, mister," Grace replied. "I will be back to clean up your leaves later."

Grace continued chasing her rampaging dog and Mrs. Katze's destructive cat. The two runaway pets entered Mr. Robertson's yard next. Mr. Robertson was a bit of a fussbudget. That is, Mr. Robertson didn't like anyone or anything on his lawn. Mr. Robertson kept his property better groomed than the local golf course. Every morning before work, Mr. Robertson would be outside, picking up any stray leaf, twig, or candy wrapper that made its way onto his property. Every evening after work, Mr. Robertson could be found outside with a pair of hand trimmers, cutting any blades of grass that dared grow faster than the other blades of grass on his lawn.

Now Snowball and Kilo were running across Mr. Robertson's finely manicured lawn and leaving cat and dog prints. Grace ran behind them and was about to leave tread marks on the property from her training shoes to make matters worse.

"No, you don't, oh no, you don't!" yelled Mr. Robertson as he frantically tried to alter Grace's path.

"Stay off my lawn, and keep your dog and cat off my lawn," cried Mr. Robertson.

"Sorry, mister," replied Grace as she tiptoed across the rest of Mr. Robertson's lawn.

The next yard belonged to Mr. Cohn. Mr. Cohn was digging a hole to plant a new maple tree. As Mr. Cohn flung a shovel full of wet, black dirt into the air, it, unfortunately, landed on Snowball. Snowball made a loud hissing noise as she continued to run. Kilo darted by the hole, and his leash accidentally caught one of the branches of the small maple tree lying on the ground. As Kilo ran, he dragged the tree behind him by his leash. As Mr. Cohn looked up, he saw Grace chasing the cat, dog, and now his tree. Before Mr. Cohn could say anything, Grace said, "Sorry, mister, I will bring your tree back."

Snowball ran to the front steps of the next yard, which belonged to her mistress Mrs. Katze. Mrs. Katze was sitting on the front steps in her robe and having a cup of coffee as she waited for her beloved Snowball to come home for the evening. When Mrs. Katze saw Snowball running toward her with Kilo, the maple tree, and Grace chasing behind, she started to scream. "Snowball, Snowball!" yelled Mrs. Katze as she reached down to pick up her cat. "What have they done to you?" Mrs. Katze asked Snowball.

Snowball was the worse for wear. Snowball's fur was covered in leaves, dirt, and mud. The once-pure white, Persian cat now resembled a dirty Dalmatian dog.

“I am so very sorry,” Grace said apologetically to Mrs. Katze. “I don’t know what got into Kilo.”

Kilo sat at the feet of Mrs. Katze, wagging his tail at Snowball, thinking the cat wanted to continue their game.

Mrs. Katze abruptly turned away from Grace and pointed at Kilo, “You keep that monster away from my Snowball,” she demanded.

Meanwhile, Mr. Cohn had caught up to his tree and walked over to Grace and Kilo.

“I believe this belongs to me,” said Mr. Cohn as he reached down to untangle his tree from Kilo’s leash.

“I am sorry, mister,” Grace said to Mr. Cohn. “Is your tree OK?” Grace asked.

Mr. Cohn held up the tree. It only had a few leaves left, and there were several broken and missing branches. It was more of a maple stick than a tree. Mr. Cohn just shrugged his shoulders and walked away.

“Come on, buddy,” Grace said to Kilo. “We better go home before you get us into any more trouble,” Grace continued.

As Grace and Kilo entered the kitchen, Grace’s father, Joe, met them.

“How did your run go?” Joe asked.

“Well, Kilo chased the neighbor cat,” said Grace defensively.

“I know; I received a couple of phone calls,” replied Joe. “We may have to go back and do some yard work and replace a maple tree,” said Joe. “You better take Kilo upstairs with you and hide him out for the night,” warned Joe.