

She ran to catch up with Aidan. The sun was shining. A squirrel chattered at her from the branch of a chestnut tree.

“Do you think Mom and Dad will ever let me get a dog?” Kat asked her brother as they walked.

Aidan shrugged. “You’ve asked them a million times. They always say no.”

“That’s because they travel so much for work. But *I* don’t!” Kat protested. “And *I’d* be the one looking after the dog.”

Aidan bounced his basketball as he walked. “I don’t know, Kat. I think you should forget about it for now.”

Kat sighed. She knew he would say that. He didn’t care if they got a dog. Her parents both liked dogs, but she was the only one who was truly dog crazy.

Kat and Aidan reached school just as the bell rang.

“Later, alligator!” Aidan said to Kat. He hurried over to the grade seven and eight entrance.

“See you soon, baboon!” Kat called after him.

She rushed across the playground. But she didn’t get in her lineup. Instead, Kat went over to the other grade four line.

“Maya!” she called. Her best friend hung back as her class made its way into the school.

“There you are, Kat-nip! Late, again!” Maya said, with a grin.

Kat made a funny face at her. Maya had called her “Kat-nip” for as long as she could remember. “You love dogs, but your name is Kat? How goofy!” she’d say. Maya often teased her, and Kat teased her back.

It was all in fun, since they had been best friends forever. Even though they lived at opposite sides of town, they had known each other since nursery school. They played soccer on the same team. They took swimming lessons together.

And, most of all, they talked about dogs together. Maya was probably the only person in the world who loved dogs as much as Kat.

Until this year, Maya and Kat had always been in the same class. But a few children had moved away over the summer. So Maya was put in the grade three-four split class, and Kat was put in the grade four-five split class.

The girls didn't like it. Not one little bit.

School had started last week. The first few days had been tough. Kat hoped it would be better this week, but it didn't seem likely.



“Joke of the day,” said Kat. “What does a mother dog call her pups when they come in from playing in the snow?”

Maya thought for a moment. “I don’t know. What?”

“I’ll tell you at recess!” Kat said, wagging her fingertips at her friend. She turned to run toward her lineup.

“Hey, not fair! Tell me now!” called Maya. “That’s torture!”

“Nope! Oh, and I have some really awesome news to tell you,” Kat called over her shoulder. “Puppy news!” she added, teasing her friend.

“Seriously? And you won’t tell me what it is until recess? You are horrible!” Maya put on her grumpy look, but she couldn’t hold it for long. Kat started to laugh, and Maya did, too.

“See you!” Kat called. She ran to the back of her own line, which had just disappeared into the school.



Chapter Two

“So?” Maya asked, running up to Kat at recess. “What does a mother dog call her pups when they come in from playing in the snow?”

Kat grinned. “The answer? Drum roll, please . . . Slush puppies!”

“Agh!” Maya groaned. She had a tennis ball in her hand, and she threw it at Kat. “Take that!”

Kat caught the ball easily and laughed out loud.