

HOME



While Mom filled out paperwork, Mike brought her a sample bag of my food, a squeaky duck like the one he stole, and coupons to buy more stuff for me. Then, we walked outside the shelter. Freedom! I tried to pull Mom in the direction I thought we should go, but she was strong. She pulled me to a large kennel-on-wheels and opened the back.

It didn't look like any place I wanted to go, so I sat. Mom patted the carpeted area. "Come on, Hank. Up here. Get in the SUV. Be a good boy."

I looked the other way—so many interesting things to explore.

She tugged harder with the leash, and her voice grew firmer. "Get in the car, Hank."

Kaden jumped into the back. Okay, that was better. I leaped on top of him, licking and hugging and pawing. Mom shut the hatch with a bang. Then she and The Girl got into the front. Kaden pushed me away and climbed over into the back seat. I tried to follow him but almost got stuck, so I stayed where I was. Maybe we'd wrestle more later. I pressed my nose

to the window and watched the kennel-on-wheels move away from the shelter and onto a busy street. A man walked a small beagle on the sidewalk. I barked loudly to let my new family know about the dog. Then, I leaned over the seat and licked Kaden's ear. He pulled his hood up and scrunched down in the corner of the seat.

"I don't know why we didn't get the shih tzu." The Girl gazed mournfully out the window.

I knew ten good reasons why not to adopt Murphy, but when I barked them out, Mom, Kaden, and The Girl shouted at me. I barked back at them. This was fun.

The trip didn't take long, and Mom drove the kennel-on-wheels into a driveway and up to a large building. I'd just been released from the shelter where we were stuck inside most of the time. I wasn't ready to go into another building. When Kaden opened his door, I squeezed over the seat back, jumped out the door, and zipped down the sidewalk, the leash dragging and flopping behind. Mom, Kaden, and The Girl shouted and raced after me.

What a great game! I was the leader, and they were chasing me. I crossed the street and dashed behind one of the buildings. They followed, but I could see they were tired. A fence stretched in front of me, so I turned to the side. Just then, I spotted the cutest little French bulldog I'd ever seen.

"Why, hello there." I put my nose through the fence mesh, and she tottered up for a sniff. Ahh, she smelled so sweet, but my new family and I were in the middle of a chase. I turned to leave, but something jerked my head around.

Kaden stood on my leash. "I caught you. You thought you could get away."

I pulled back toward the French bulldog, but Kaden held on well for a scrawny kid. "Come on, Hank, I'll show you your new house."

All the running wore me out. I panted and padded after Kaden.

The house he mentioned wasn't scary at all. When we entered, Kaden took off my leash and told me, "Go ahead. It's your home. Explore all you want."

I trotted down the hall to rooms with huge beds and soft blankets. I wandered through a room that smelled like *The Girl*, then to a room with the biggest bed of all. It smelled like Mom and too much perfume. And the smell of someone I hadn't met.

I went down some stairs and found more rooms. I stuck my head in one that smelled like Kaden. I jumped onto the bed and rumbled all the blankets, making it more comfortable. Then I noticed something on the floor, hopped off, and picked it up.

I heard a door open and went to investigate, carrying the thing that smelled like Kaden.

In the entry, I dropped the Kaden-thing and barked many barks so everyone would know someone had walked into our house. *The Girl* and Kaden rushed in, and Kaden grabbed my collar. "That's just Dad."

"This is the new dog?" Dad shook his head. "Couldn't you have found something smaller?" He reached a hand toward me, and I recognized his smell. It was the one from Mom's room down the hall. I pulled away from Kaden's grasp, put my paws on his shoulders, and licked his face.

"Down, Hank," Mom scolded.

Kaden giggled. "He's very friendly."

Dad pushed my paws off his shoulders and bent down. "Hello, Hank. If you are going to live in our house, you need to learn a few manners. No jumping." I rolled over so he could see my nice belly and scratch it, which he did.

Mom picked up the Kaden-thing. "Why is your underwear in the entryway?"

Kaden frowned. "It's the dog's fault. He carried it up here."

She handed the underwear to Kaden. "If it had been in the hamper, he couldn't pick it up. Put it in the laundry, then take Hank in the backyard so he knows where to go the bathroom."

Kaden scowled. "It's my electronic time."

"You're supposed to be doing homework. Take Hank outside, then get your homework done before any gaming."

Kaden fisted the underwear into a ball and shot a perfect three-pointer from the hall to the basket in the laundry room. "Hank, come on," he called.

We went out a door from the kitchen to a gigantic playground. I zoomed around the yard, showing off a little with my speed. I rolled around in the grass to scratch my back. Then I used the grass and followed Kaden back inside.

When Kaden went downstairs, I went with him. He sat in front of his computer and tipped back his chair. He picked up a water bottle and tossed it in the air several times.

Was this what Mom called homework? Maybe I could help. The next time he tossed the bottle, I caught it and carried it upstairs. Kaden followed, yelling something at me. I ran through the kitchen, around a table, and down the hall.

Mom stepped in front of me. Before I could turn around, she took the water bottle. "Kaden, this is probably not a good thing to give Hank."

"I didn't give it to him. He took it."

"You're supposed to be doing homework."

Kaden pointed to me. "It's his fault."

Mom sighed. "Do you need to bring your Chromebook to the kitchen table so I can keep an eye on you?"

"No, I'm not a kindergartener." Kaden stomped downstairs. I followed, but he slipped inside, and the door banged shut in my face. I whined a bit and scratched, but he didn't open it, so I trotted back upstairs.

Some delicious smells came from the kitchen. It had been a long time since my bowl of dog food at the shelter. I put my paws on the counter so I could see better. A plate of round pieces of meat lay waiting to be grilled. I stretched my head out, my nose inhaling the odors. I pulled off one meat patty, and in two gulps, it was gone. I reached for another.

“Hank!” Mom’s voice was not kind and soothing. She was very angry about something. I stepped down from the counter and hid behind the table.

Dad walked into the room and looked from Mom to the platter of remaining meat. “What happened?”

“I was in the pantry getting ketchup. The dog stole a hamburger.” She slumped down. “James, was this a mistake? Should I take the dog back?”

Back? To the shelter? Could she do that?

Dad ran his fingers through his hair. “Well, he is a shelter dog. He’s probably had no training. Maybe he was just hungry. We can extend him grace, give him a few days to settle in, and then decide.”