

Mazy Mooney and Friends

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1. My Best Friend Charlie – Mazy's best friend Charlie lives right across the street from her. She tries to include him in almost everything she does. Sometimes Charlie is a little jealous of her other friends and shows it at Mazy's backyard picnic. When an accident happens, Charlie is involved in it. Mazy lets him know that everything is going to be all right.

2. Sally Mae Jones and the Ferris Wheel Ride – Sally Mae is Charlie's cousin who comes to stay two weeks with him every year when school is out. She has always been too afraid to ride the Ferris wheel but decides it is time to do it at the county fair. Sally Mae is taking Mazy, Charlie, Rachael, Anna, and Joanie with her. It turns out to be an exciting ride.

3. Downtown Christmas – Mazy invites Charlie to come on a train ride to downtown Chicago. She and her family are going to see the magnificent Christmas lights of the city. Charlie gets shuffled away with a large crowd of people. Mazy loses him for a short time. When they find him, she lets him know how important he is to her.

4. Crazy Hat Day – A new girl in school, named Bobby, joins in on the fun. The hat she puts together gets more laughs than she liked. With feelings hurt, she throws it off her head and runs into the bathroom at school. When Mazy finds Bobby, she lets her know that it is all in fun. Everyone laughs at the hats. The new girl says that she used to get made fun of, and the laughter stirred up bad feelings again.

When they get back into the school hallway, the new girl can see everyone is joining in on the fun.

5. A New Puppy – Adding a new puppy to the household can be a big challenge. Mazy and her family figure this out when they decide to take on a new pet. The puppy is rambunctious, and it takes quite a while to calm him down. In the end, they are glad they decided to get him.

6. Fairies in the Flower Garden – Mazy goes out to the flower garden to read a book. She soon discovers there are fairies out there. Not just one, but many of them.

When she tells Mom and Dad, they do not believe her and don't even go out to look for themselves. Charlie won't come over to check it out either. Mazy finds out what happened when Dad calls her in to eat.

7. The Birdhouse – Mazy says robins are her favorite birds. She loves to see them come every spring. Dad had built her a beautiful birdhouse that was still in the garage. She persuades her friend, Anna, into going to get a birdhouse for herself. When Mazy comes home, she puts

hers out in the front yard tree. A storm does damage to it,
but only after the robins have gone.

Chapter 1

My Best Friend Charlie

My name is Mazy Mooney, and Charlie Roberts lives right across the street from me. We do lots of things together, such as ride bikes, chase each other around the block, play baseball, roller skate, go to the park, and hang around at school. He is my best friend.

We get along with each other very well, unless some girls want me to do things with them. When that happens, I know Charlie will not come around much. He doesn't want to do some of the things we girls are doing. If I see him out in his yard, I ask if he would like to come over anyway.

He has other friends too that come to visit him once in a while. Thomas is one of them. Sometimes he tries to cause trouble.

There is Tony, who lives a couple of blocks down our street. Ryan and Todd visit Charlie sometimes too.

When the boys all get together, I stay to myself. That is probably the way Charlie feels when we all ask him to join us.

One fine afternoon Joanie and Anna came to visit me. We decided to do hide and seek. As I looked across the street, Charlie was sitting on his front steps.

“Come on over, Charlie,” I yelled to him. “We are going to play hide and seek.”

“No thanks,” replies Charlie. “My dad wants me to help him clean the garage.”

Maybe that's true, but I don't think he wants to be seen playing with girls. I knew he would not join us.

“Suit yourself,” I yelled.

OUR SUMMER PICNIC

Back in July, my parents were having a picnic in our backyard. They invited family, friends, and neighbors. Charlie, Willie, and their parents, along with his cousin Sally Mae Jones, were asked to join us. Lots of people came, including my friends Joanie, Anna, and Rachael.

Everyone ate a lot and visited each other. The adults played horseshoes and bean bag toss.

My friends and I played other games.

There is a tetherball in my backyard. That is one thing we all like to do, so we took turns with different partners. First, it was Rachael and me. Then it was Joanie and Anna. Finally, as Charlie kind of stood back away from us, I asked him to play. He shuffled over, and we began to hit the ball. He had a weird look on his face.

“What is the matter, Charlie?” I asked. “Aren't you having a good time?”

“I don't know,” he replied. “You don't care anyway.”

“Sure I do,” I said.

“You have all your other friends to be with, and I know you just asked me to play because you feel sorry for me,” he told me while he hit the ball again.

“I always want to play with you, Charlie,” I told him.

We hit back and forth a few times, not getting anywhere.

Just then, he punched the ball so hard it came around and hit me square in the face. My nose started hurting right away.

“Ouch,” I cried out loud. “What did you do that for?”

“I’m sorry,” Charlie said. “I didn’t mean to hit it so hard.”

I sat down on the grass to get hold of myself. Charlie sat down beside me while Anna went to get Mom.

“My nose hurts,” I told everyone.

“Let me get a good look at your nose, Mazy,” said Mom when she came closer to check me out. “What happened here?”

“Charlie punched the ball, and it hit me in the nose so hard,” I told her.

“I sure didn’t mean to hurt Mazy,” Charlie told my mom.

Holding my hand over my nose, I felt something warm seeping between my fingers. I looked and saw blood!

Mom sent Dad into the house to get a moist washcloth.

“Here, hold this on your nose for a few minutes and pinch it a little. The Bleeding will stop,” Mom told me. “These things happen sometimes. You just need to be careful.”

By then, several people had gathered around us. One of them was Charlie’s mom. She just gave him a funny look

and took him to the picnic table. It looked like she was scolding him.

“Charlie didn’t mean to do this,” I told everyone. He just hit the ball hard.

Mom checked me over good, and the pain finally stopped. She told me to be careful not to bump it. She felt the outside of my nose with her fingers to make sure nothing felt out of place and looked up inside.

I got up and walked around the yard a little bit.

“Let’s go do something,” Joanie said.

The girls and I decided to go down to the park. I looked back over my shoulder and invited Charlie to come with us. With a grin on his face, he caught up. Sally Mae tagged along too.

“Come on, Charlie,” I said.

The park wasn't far away.

The wind began to pick up, and the trees rustled. It was a hot day with the sun shining overhead. The breeze was welcoming and made us feel a little cooler.

As we walked, Charlie apologized again and said he realized that getting mad over me having other friends was silly. He knew we were best friends forever.

“No matter how many other people we have in our life, we will always have time for each other,” I told him.

He just likes to be reminded sometimes.

We got on the swings and went up as high as we could go. Then we went down the slide about a hundred times. The monkey bars came last. I tried to be careful not to bump my nose. But, when taking one last swing hanging on with my arms, Charlie came barreling down with his left foot hitting my nose.

“Ouch,” I whispered.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” Charlie said. “I slipped and couldn’t catch myself.”

“What’s wrong?” asked Joanie. “Your nose looks pretty red.”

“It hurts a little, but I’m careful,” I told her without letting anyone know what had just happened.

After we all played together at the park, Charlie suggested we ride bikes down the sidewalk. But, we decided to go

back to my house to finish our picnic. By then, all of us were ready to eat again.

We grabbed some food and something to drink.

Sitting in the yard, we talked, including Charlie, who was getting in on the conversations. Lots of different things were brought up, including going back to school. We didn't stay on that subject long, because we had a lot more time left on our summer vacation.

It wasn't too long before most of our guests started getting ready to go. The men picked up the trash, and the women gathered all of the dishes. My friends and I pitched in to help fold chairs and move tables. We were all going in different directions.

“You know, your nose is a little swollen,” said Rachael. “Maybe you should let your mom take another look at it.”

“I need to go inside and look in the mirror first,” I told her. I stepped inside the bathroom as I got into the house to take a good peek. “Oh, it is big and red.”

I yelled at mom to come and see it. “It's a little swollen,” she said. “It looks like it is alright, but I will make you an appointment to see the Dr. on Monday. You all have to be careful with that tetherball.”

That did make me feel a little better when she said it looked fine.

Rachael and I went back outside to sit at the picnic table. Toni, Charlie's friend, had stopped by and joined the group. They were all laughing and messing around as we approached.

I let them know what mom had said. Charlie looked sad. I told him not to worry about it. He let out a groan but had a smile at the same time.

"Don't you worry, Charlie," I said. "You can just call me Rudolph until this redness and swelling goes down."

Everyone laughed with me

Chapter 2

Sally Mae Jones and the Ferris-Wheel Ride

Sally Mae Jones is head and shoulders above all of her friends. Her red hair and freckles make her stand out in a crowd. She is smart, funny, and also has a heart as big as Texas. This time of year, she has only one thing on her mind. The County Fair was opening in two days. Sally Mae decided this year she was taking a Ferris wheel ride. She loves the county fair and goes every year.

Sally Mae is my friend, Charlie's cousin who lives with her family out in the country on a farm. She lives far enough away to only visit once in a while. Every year, at the end of June, she comes to stay a couple of weeks with Charlie and his family, and that is when the fair takes place.

She had been too afraid to ride it in the past, but not this time. This year was going to be different. All of us were going on Saturday, and she was not about to be left out.

Sally Mae told me, "When I get to the top of that big wheel, I will be able to see as far as the whole world."

She was probably right. It was tall.

I had been on the Ferris wheel once with Mom and Dad. It was a long time ago, and I was too small to remember it

THE FERRIS WHEEL RIDE

Saturday came. Sally Mae, and the rest of us, stayed busy picking out clothes to wear and calling each other with excitement in our voices. We knew where to meet when we got to the fair. I called Anna and Rachael to make sure they knew where to meet us. Joanie was coming with me. Sallie Mae was with Charlie and his family. The plan was to gather by the ice cream stand.

We were so excited about the fair. It had lots of other fun things to do and see besides the Ferris wheel. There was the 4H tent, the pony rides, food, craft booths, and, of course, other rides. But, Sally Mae was determined to try the Ferris wheel this year. She was ready and wanted my friends and me to go with her.

Our anxiety was overflowing by the time we got there. Sally Mae and Charlie found all of us where we planned to meet. We walked around with our parents for a while, tried some funnel cake, and then ventured off to get in

line for some rides. We would be saving the best for last. Even though we thought we were too big for the merry-go-round, we got on it anyway.

Joanie and Anna sat on a bench right in front of Sally Mae and me. We were on horses. Rachael and Charlie were way on the other side on horses as well.

After riding several other rides, we then decided it was time for the big moment. While walking towards the Ferris wheel, Charlie ran into his parents and older brother Willie.

"Hey, Willie," I said. "We are headed over to get in line for the Ferris wheel. Do you want to come with us?"

"No thanks," Willie piped in. "I get sick on rides. We are just looking at the booths and getting some popcorn to take home with us."

"I see," I answered. "Charlie is going with us if it is alright. See you later."

We stood in line for that ride, and we could hardly wait. There were several people ahead of us, but that didn't matter.

"There are butterflies in my tummy," said Anna.

“Me too,” said Rachael as she wiped the sweat from her forehead.

All of a sudden, it got windy and dark outside. We all looked up and saw the rolling and mean-looking clouds.

“Where did this storm come from?” Anna asked.

We were too busy having fun to notice.

“I don’t know,” Rachael answered. “It looks pretty bad out here, and it came up fast.”

The clouds overhead were dark, and it did look like a storm. If it started to rain, the rides would shut down. That is exactly what happened. A big boom of thunder and then down came the drops of water. There was lightning in the distance. We all scrambled under a big food tent to keep from getting too wet. There we stayed, watching the rainfall hit the ground causing large puddles of water in front of us. The wind was blowing signs off of and anything that wasn't secured. Some of the kids lost their balloons. They soared higher than we could see them with all of the clouds above our heads.

“Now, what do we do?” I asked the others.

“Don’t worry,” said Joanie. “This will pass, you will see.”

“I guess so,” said Sally Mae. “This would have to happen when I got this close to getting on that wonderful ride.”

The storm lasted for about thirty minutes. The temperature dropped, and the dampness made us shiver. Several other people were standing under the tent with us.

Just like that, it all stopped. The clouds rolled away, and out came the sun. What a lucky break. Unfortunately, it took a little while for the rides to get up and running again. Everything was wet. The county fair workers cleaned until things were dry. They picked up signs and papers that were everywhere.

At last, the time came for us all to get back in line. The closer we got to the front, the more butterflies we felt, but Sally Mae and the rest of us were not about to stop now. This ride was what we had waited for since last summer. We all had chickened out, but this year was different, and there was no backing out.

“Charlie, are you ready for this?” I asked him.

“No,” said Charlie as he stepped out of line. “I’m not ready yet. I will just watch from the side over there.”

Sally Mae gave him a sour look. We all knew she wasn't happy with Charlie. I hoped that it wouldn't make her decide not to go through with it.

All of us watched him as he walked away. He stepped over by the hot dog stand and turned in our direction.

Two by two, we boarded the Ferris wheel. There was only one problem. Without Charlie, one of us was either going to ride alone or with a stranger. That happened to be Rachael. She was all alone.

We were strapped in and ready to go. Sally Mae let out a little yelp when we got started while looking up to the top and screamed on the way down with every circle we made. We were having the time of our lives, but I was a little embarrassed by my partner. We held on tight to the security bar placed in front of us and closed our eyes.

What a feeling it was. It felt good on our faces. We were both smiling at each other. I was just as happy as she was.

I figured the others were having fun too. I didn't want the seat to rock, so I didn't try to look for them. Then I heard someone say, "she is throwing up."

We held on tight. As we came up to the top and stopped to let someone off down below, Sally Mae looked around

There it was, just as she had imagined it would be. There were trees, people, fields, and all the booths. She said she could see the whole world. The butterflies were still there, but for a different reason. As the wheel went slowly down, we waved to people we knew that were standing near. Mom and Dad watched us until we got off. Mom had a nervous look on her face. Joanie's mom was also in the crowd. Charlie and Willie were sitting on a bench under a shade tree waving to beat the band.

After the ride was over, all of us had decided that this was the best day ever. We walked away with lots of things to say about our Ferris wheel ride.

Anna looked a little green in the face and said she needed to find the restroom. Joanie followed close behind her.

One of the ride attendants was cleaning up a mess.

We realized it was Anna that had gotten sick.

Rachael said she wasn't going to ride without one of us next year.

Sally Mae had a grin from ear to ear.

"I will never forget this," said Sally Mae. "Let's plan on doing this again every year."

Most of us decided that was a great idea

Chapter 3

Downtown Christmas

On a cold December morning, I woke up before dawn and realized this was the big day. Slipping out of bed, I went to the bathroom down the hall and then back under the warm covers. While laying there, my mind was racing. Mom and Dad were taking me downtown Chicago to see all of the beautiful Christmas decorations. Charlie was to go with us. Anna and her parents were planning on joining too, but something came up, and they had to cancel.

We were about an hour's drive away from the train station, and we had to leave about 8:30 AM to make sure we arrived on time. The plan was to stay for the day and see the decorations when it got dark.

As soon as I heard shuffling around in the hallway, I jumped up to start getting ready.

“Time to get up,” called Mom from outside my bedroom door.

“I’m up already,” I yelled.

My clothes, I had decided to wear, were laid out on the arm of my chair. After getting dressed, I went downstairs to see about some breakfast. The kitchen clock showed it was almost 7:00 AM.

“Call Charlie and make sure he is up,” Mom said. “We need to leave on time this morning.”

Grabbing the phone, I dialed his number. His mom, Jan, answered.

“Hello,” Jan said sleepily.

“Is Charlie up?” I asked.

She assured me he was and had been for a while. She handed the phone to Charlie.

“I will be there soon, and I am almost ready,” said Charlie.

Willie’s voice could be heard in the background, but it was hard to understand what he was saying.

OUR TRIP TO THE CITY

Charlie arrived right on time. We were in the car and ready to go. We talked about all kinds of things as we got

started on our ride to the station. Stopping for gas held us up a little because there was a very long line. Dad kept looking at his watch to keep track of what time it was. I could tell he was getting a little frustrated by the frown on his face. We finally got out of there and were on our way.

Dad took care of the tickets when getting to the station, and we waited on nearby benches.

We boarded the train, took out seats, and went on to see the Christmas scenes and lights of the big city.

There were lots of places to try and fit into this one-day Holiday adventure.

We arrived at the Chicago train station in about two hours and stepped off into the cold air. It was beginning to snow. We made sure our hats, gloves, and scarves were in place and took off into the city streets.

We decided to do a little shopping, and the first stop was Macy's. Finding a few items there, we decided to go to Bloomingdale's, and Saks. We didn't want to carry too much stuff around with us, but there were sales in every store.

About two in the afternoon, we were getting hungry and found a place to eat. There was too much to do to stop for lunch, but we did.

“Mom, there are so many places to see Christmas Lights,” I told her. I was holding a brochure in my hand that explained all the sites.

“Let’s try to see as many of them as we can,” she explained. “We have to board the train to go home by 9:00 PM tonight.”

“There is a mile lights festival that starts on Michigan Avenue,” I said. “Do you want to start with that? Then there is a huge tree in the museum of science and industry if we could find it. But, I guess all of the taxi drivers will take us where we want to go. There are other things to look for while it is still light outside.”

It was a cloudy day, so you could see the pretty decorations even before it got real dark. We set out to see as much of the brilliant Chicago Christmas lights as possible. We found some of the places that I had mentioned. After that, we caught a taxi to go to Navy Pier, to find a Winter Wonder Fest. The streets were a little slippery, so the driver didn't go too fast. It was so great, taking in all of the sights. Department store

windows, Christmas trees, and other sites were all magnificent. Christmas music was playing as we walked along. As night came upon us, things were much brighter.

Getting back on State Street, we ran into a large group of people. It appeared that they were one large group trying to stay together as they made their way around others headed in the opposite direction. Charlie and I were holding on to each other's hands to make sure he didn't get separated from me. We followed Mom and Dad. It seemed they had picked up the pace a little. All of a sudden, two young boys passed between us. Charlie got tangled up in the group of people. When I turned to find him, he wasn't there. The wind picked up and whirled the snow around, which made it hard to see. I thought maybe Charlie got ahead of me somehow. I looked for him, turning in every direction calling his name. Mom and Dad just kept ongoing. I heard his muffled voice but wasn't sure.

“Mom, Dad,” I cried. “Slow down. I lost Charlie.”

“What did you say?” asked Dad. “Where did he go?”

“He is behind us somewhere,” I shouted.

"Let's stop right here," Mom said to us. "We will go back to find him. He can't be that far away."

The snow was coming down hard. When we turned back and headed in the other direction, it was blowing in our faces. The large group had passed, but there were still people on the street and sidewalks making their way toward us.

"Charlie, where are you?" I repeated.

We walked about three blocks down and continued to call his name. Catching up with that large group, we could see them turn left onto a side street. I heard Charlie's voice but still didn't see him. He called my name. I yelled back.

"Let's turn around and go the direction we just came from," Dad said.

We were still fighting the snow. All of a sudden, we saw Charlie sitting on the steps of one of the stores. He had his hands over his eyes and looked sad.

"Charlie, here we are," Dad told him.

"I was so scared," said Charlie. "When we got separated, I was all turned around. One of the men next to me put his hand on my back to guide me along. I realized it was the

wrong direction, and started looking for all of you. Then I decided to break away from the crowd, sit down on these steps and, wait to see if you could find me.

“You are alright now,” I said softly to him.

“Yes. and so glad to see you,” he replied.

“We would have looked until morning if we had to,” Mom told him.

“You are my best friend, Charlie,” I said. I put my arm around his shoulder. We were both shivering.

We sat on the step with him for a few minutes. Dad looked at his watch and realized that it was time to head back to the station to get on the train to go home. It was so cold. Charlie and I huddled together as we walked.

Mom called Jan to let her know we would be heading home soon. She told her that Charlie had gotten lost from us for a short time. Jan told Mom she was glad he was alright and that Charlie was lucky to have people like us to take him on this trip.

There was enough time for one more stop. On the way to the train station, we stopped to have hot chocolate in a

small coffee shop. Then we walked until reaching our destination.

After boarding the train we talked about our trip, and even though there was that moment when Charlie got lost, we decided it was a good day.

This downtown Chicago Christmas time holiday would be a great memory for us all

Chapter 4

Crazy Hat Day

Every year around homecoming time, the school has fun dress-up days. There is pajama day, miss-match day, school colors day, inside out day, and crazy hat day. They are all fun, but finding or making a hat to wear is my favorite

FUN DAYS And THE NEW STUDENT

This year is no different, and I will get my hat ready in plenty of time. Mom found one that my grandma used to wear when she was young. She said we could use it and add some things if we like. It is big and round with flowers all over it. My idea was to add some feathers, sequins, and maybe a ribbon or two. By the time I get done, it may be a bit too much, but that is what crazy hat day is all about.

“Can we work on the hat tonight, Mom?” I asked when looking up from my reading assignment.

“Yes, that's fine. I will have some things ready to work on it after supper,” Mom said. “I may need to pick up some ribbon, but we have other things that you mentioned to put on it.”

“Great,” I answered. “We will make it the best that anyone has ever seen.”

When I got to school, I talked with some of the other girls in my class. We all discussed what kind of hats we would wear this year, and met up with Charlie.

“I might not even do that crazy hat day this year at all,” Charlie said.

He says that every year but finally makes one just like the rest of us.

A student who was new to our school heard us talking and came to join us. She had several good suggestions. She said her father liked to fish and said he had a hat he loved to wear. It had fish, hooks, and other fishing stuff all over it. I didn't say much, except that I thought it sounded more like a boy's hat. But, whatever she wanted to wear was fine.

Charlie snickered and got up to leave. I followed him.

“Charlie, that was not very nice of you to laugh at her,” I told him. “She is new, and we need to be making her feel like she fits it.”

“Okay, but that description of the hat just hit me, I couldn’t help it,” he said.

The new student's name was Roberta, but everyone called her Bobby. As we talked about making crazy hats, Bobby told us that she did things like fishing, hiking, and helping do outdoor chores.

“I am kind of a tomboy,” she said

Well, that was alright with me, and she would fit right in with the rest of our group. We all liked her.

On Thursday evening I finished my hat.

“Mom,” I said. “This hat is so great, and it is ready for tomorrow.” It was a soft pink velvet hat with only flowers on it. Mom and I added feathers, ribbons, and glitter of all colors.

“It looks nice, but hopefully it is crazy enough for you,” Mom replied.

I tried it on and looked into the mirror in my bedroom. “Wow,” I screamed. “This is probably the best we have ever made.”

“Let me get a good look at it,” Mom said as she came into the room.

“See, Mom,” I said while turning around.

“Yep, that is certainly the craziest hat yet,” she told me.

Friday morning came, and when Mom dropped me off at school, I found my group of friends right away. We stood around laughing and admiring each other's creations.

Suddenly Bobby came wandering up.

We could not hold back the giggles. The new student had on a fishing hat having so much hanging from it, and it was about to fall off. There were fish hooks, lures, pictures of fish, fishing line curled around it, and little things too numerous to count. She had to explain what the items were because most of us didn't know.

The laughter continued coming from my classmates. That included Charlie.

Bobby's face got red as a beet, and she ran up the stairs to the school and into the building. As she got to the top

step, she grabbed the hat off her head and gave it a toss. She was crying too.

Charlie picked it up and was holding it and a few items that had come off.

I went inside to find her. I decided to check in the bathroom. There she was, standing by the window crying and holding her face in her hands.

We could still hear laughter out in the hallway. I know Bobby was embarrassed.

“Bobby, are you alright?” I asked.

“No, I feel horrible,” she whispered with sadness in her voice. “Dad thought my hat was great. He helped me put it together, and we both loved it.” She sobbed.

“It is a fine hat, Bobby,” I told her while getting a little closer. “But it is a crazy hat day, and people are going to find a lot of them funny. That is the point.”

“I understand,” Bobby said. “But, most of the schools I have gone to have been difficult for me. We have moved around a lot. Dad didn't have much money to buy new clothes and shoes. So, I wore second-hand or hand-me-down things. There were a lot of times when people made

fun of me. When everyone laughed, I remembered those bad times."

"Oh, Bobby," I said. "We do this every year at this time. When crazy hat day comes, we all make them so we can laugh a little. Does that make sense?"

"Yes, it does," Bobby replied to me. I didn't react to it very well, but I couldn't help it."

Just then, Rachael came walking into the bathroom holding Bobby's hat. "Here, Bobby," she said as she handed it over.

Bobby took it, and we both encouraged her to put it back on. Some of the many fishing items hanging from it had come loose. All three of us worked on it until we heard the first bell ring. As we walked out of the bathroom into the hallway, we heard several students laughing as they walked by. But they were doing that to everyone. Even the teachers were having a good time.

Rachael and I walked with Bobby. Joanie and Anna caught up with us and walked behind us. We found Charlie by the water fountain getting a drink of water. When he stood up, we could see that he had put a sock hat on with big eyes and ears. We couldn't help ourselves. We

all giggled. Bobby let out the biggest laugh of all. Coming toward us was one of the boys with a ten-gallon cowboy hat that took up most of the room on his side of the hallway. We all got a big kick out of that.

“See what I mean?” I asked Bobby. "This is all for fun. Like all the other things we did this week.

She smiled as we went on down the hall

Chapter 5

A New Puppy

One nice warm day, Mom and I were out taking a walk around the neighborhood. We saw lots of people out in their yards, passing us on the sidewalk, and several out with their dogs.

“I wish we had another dog,” I told Mom. “It has been about a year now since Shadow has been gone, and I miss having one around.”

“Me too,” answered Mom. “I was just talking to your Dad the other day about visiting the shelter to see if we could maybe adopt a puppy.”

“Wow, for real?” I asked.

“Yes, really,” Mom said. “I didn't want to mention it to you until we were sure that we would move forward with that decision. But, since you brought it up, I wanted to tell you.”

Well, that put a lighter feel in my step. We talked more about it as we walked. And again when we got home too.

WILL DAD LET US GET A NEW PUPPY

Dad was sitting in his living room chair when we got back from home.

“Hi Dad,” I said to him while came into the room. “Mom and I have been thinking about getting a new puppy. What do you think?”

“Mom and I have discussed that issue, but we have to make sure we are all going to do our part if we do bring a puppy into the family. After we lost Shadow, it was hard to talk about a new pet. Shadow was a part of this family for many years,” Dad reminded me.

“Okay,” I said. “Just think about all the fun we would have.”

“Dad and I will discuss it further, Mazy,” Mom pipped in.

Going back outside, I sat on the front porch steps. My mind was racing with ideas about getting a puppy. I looked across the street, and Charlie was out on his front porch too.

“Hey Charlie,” I yelled.

“Hi Mazy,” Charlie yelled back.

Charlie came over to talk for a while. I told him about the possibility of getting a new family pet. He just looked at me with questioning eyes. His family had lots of pets. Cats that wandered the entire neighborhood, a parrot, a bunny in the back yard, and two big husky dogs that lived in the house with them. Charlie wasn't too excited about my idea.

After he left, I went to my room and called Joanie. We were working on a school project that would be due in a few days, and I wanted to ask her some questions about it.

“Hi Joanie,” I said. “How are you doing?”

“Oh, fine, just busy,” she said."

“We need to talk about that project we are working on, but it can wait,” I said.

“Well, maybe I can work on that with you tomorrow. Some of my cousins are coming over,” said Joanie.

“Alright,” I told her. “Talk to you tomorrow.”

Hanging up the phone, I went to the kitchen to help Mom. She was very busy putting together a nice big salad for supper. Dad was out by the garage grilling some burgers.

There was a knock on the front door, and I went to answer it.

There on the steps were Anna and Rachael. They were holding a box in their hands, and inside it was three little puppies. They were all huddled together in the corner when I stepped out and looked down at them.

“Where did you get these?” I asked them both.

“Our neighbor, Mr. Watson, has been trying to find homes for the eight puppies his dog Goldie had,” said Rachael. “There are only these three left. We wanted to show them to you.”

I asked the girls to wait while I went to get Mom and Dad. When we returned, the girls had the puppies out in the yard so they could run around. Two of them were pretty calm, but one that caught my eye was jumping all over the place.

Anna and Rachael explained to my parents about helping Mr. Watson find homes for the puppies. We all had smiles as we watched them play in the grass.

I got down on the ground and let the puppies climb all over me.

“We have been thinking about getting a new puppy,” I told the girls.

“Look no further,” said Anna.

My parents went over to the side of the house and were talking.

When they came back, we decided on the one that was the most excited. The puppy jumped and squealed like "Take Me."

Charlie came over from across the street to see what all the excitement was.

When the girls left, Charlie and I stayed out in the yard playing with our new friend. We came up with the name Sparky. I thought that was a fitting name for my new puppy.

The first week with Sparky was nearly a nightmare. He left puddles and other things, such as chewed-up newspapers, everywhere he went. We worked hard at getting him to go outside, taking him every hour or so to get him used to the idea.

Our busy puppy would go outside to play, then come back in to make messes. At night he barked, howled, and

whimpered. We were running out of patience. I tried to keep him in my room in a doggy bed, but that did not work out. Putting him in bed with me wasn't good, because he wouldn't relax enough for either one of us to get any rest.

One sunny Saturday morning, I took him outside to let him run around. Mom yelled at me from inside the house to let me know Joanie called and needed to talk to me. I stepped inside to give her a call. By the time I went back out, Sparky was nowhere in sight. I called and looked everywhere. I knew I should have taken him inside with me.

I went to all the nearby neighbor's yards to see if maybe he was hiding somewhere. Giving up, I went home to tell Mom and Dad. They decided to come out and help me look.

It was my fault. If only I had not left Sparky outside while I made my call, this would not have happened. My parents tried to make me feel better about the situation, but I wouldn't hear of it. I was on a mission and refused to go back home without our puppy.

One of our nearest neighbors, Mr. Hogan, had a friendly dog that mainly stayed outside in a backyard dog house. I

walked closer and patted his dog on the head, and heard a little cry coming from under a nearby shed. As I looked over in that direction, I could see Sparky sticking his tiny nose out from underneath it. I ran over and got him out and held him in my arms. He almost got away from me again.

“Mom, Dad,” I yelled. “Here he is.”

“Maybe we need to fence in a small area in the backyard for Sparky,” Dad said.

Mom agreed. Dad got on that project a few days later to make a safe place for our new puppy to play in. We all decided he needed a small dog house for when he was outside, a nice collar, some toys, and a bed for him to sleep.

After Dad got the fenced-in area completed, we had one more incident with Sparky.

One day, when I got home from school, I took our bouncy little puppy out with me in the backyard. We both went into the fenced area to play. After running around for a while, Sparky got tired and laid down to rest.

I went back into the house when Mom called me to eat supper and decided to come back out later to play with him.

When I came back outside, he was nowhere in sight. Walking around the fence, I found a hole dug underneath just the other side of his dog house. He had escaped.

Away we went hunting for Sparky. We looked everywhere a puppy might go. Mom and Dad were getting upset because he was becoming a little more to handle than we had thought he would be.

After checking the spots we had checked last time, it was getting dark, and time to give it up. Then a policeman came walking up the sidewalk near our house. In his arms, he had our puppy. He told us that someone had informed him of our search, and he found Sparky a block from downtown. I thought we were all in trouble. All these thoughts ran through my head. Was he going to take our new family member away?

“I see that you have a nice collar on him, but if you had one with his name and your address, it would be easier finding his home if he gets lost again,” he told us. I know you don't want anything to happen to this fine puppy of yours.”

“No,” we all answered at the same time.

He handed Sparky over to us.

Dad fixed the spot where Sparky had dug under the fence and escaped. He bought a new collar and had our puppy's name and address put on it.

As time passed, we all got more and more used to the new addition, and he got more used to being around us. He even began to calm down a little and left fewer messes in the house. Sparky became a great addition to our family, and we never regretted picking him for our very own.

Chapter 6

Fairies in the Flower Garden

My mom always has the prettiest flowers I've ever seen. She has a big garden in the back yard. There are gladiolas, irises, jonquils, dahlias, marigolds, roses, zinnias, and wildflowers. I help her keep the garden free of weeds and watered when it is dry.

IN THE FLOWER GARDEN

Reading is one of my favorite things to do. A wooden bench sits on one corner of the garden that I like to sit on while reading my books. There was a gentle breeze, the sun was out, and the smell was heavenly. So, I went out to read. After a couple of chapters, I heard a noise. My first thought was maybe it was a spider or a mouse, but this tiny little figure with wings came crawling out from under a leaf. The winged figure fluttered and rose straight up in the air. Its little body was so sweet, and it was about as big as a hummingbird. I wasn't afraid of it, but it sure did take me by surprise. It never made a noise. The fairy flew

around me as I sat there quietly. Then it landed on the bench. It was looking around as if waiting for something.

I spent about an hour or so in the garden. The fairy stayed with me and fluttered in and out of flowers. Then all of a sudden, there were more fairies. They were all so magical.

When I stood up to leave and go get my parents, I thought they would follow me, but they disappeared. I walked toward the house and looked back several times, but didn't see them anymore.

I went inside and told Mom and Dad, "There are fairies in the flower garden."

"Oh, you must be mistaken," Mom told me. "Maybe what you are seeing are hummingbirds." "There are lots of pretty ones that fly around the flowers. I love to sit out there and watch them."

"No, there are real little fairies in our flower garden," I told her. "You and Dad need to come out there with me, and I will show you. They just appeared out of nowhere and flew around me while I was reading. When I got up from the bench to walk away, they were gone."

Mom just gave me a funny look. But, to satisfy me, she looked out the kitchen window. One of those fairies flew

right up where she could see it, and Mom jumped. Then, she tripped over one of the kitchen chairs and hurt her leg. Dad rushed over to help her up, and she groaned.

“Dad,” I said. “You have to believe me. There are fairies all over the place in the flower garden. Mom just saw one.”

“I’m not sure what that was, Mazy,” mom said. “I don’t think that was a fairy.”

Mom sat down at the kitchen table to rest for a few minutes.

There was no response from Dad.

I went back outside by myself to the flower garden, the fairies were just like I had seen them before. "No one is going to believe me," I thought to myself.

Who could blame them? If someone told me something like that, it would be hard for me to believe too.

The fairies landed on my hands, shoulders, and even the top of my head. They were not bothering me, so I went on with my reading. It was peaceful. Just then, the fairies lifted me from the bench and took me to a place I had never seen before. There were hundreds of fairies flying

everywhere. There were little houses, roads, and more flowers than anyone could count. The colors were so bright, the smell was sweet, and I got caught up in this exciting fairy world.

Rubbing my eyes, I told them I had to get my best friend Charlie so he could see how special this was.

Suddenly, I was back on the garden bench.

I got up to go get Charlie. He could come with me and see the fairies. I would have proof that they do exist. Quickly I raced across the street and knocked on his door.

“Hi Charlie,” I said. “You need to come with me. There is something I want you to see.”

“What is it?” Charlie asked.

“Well, there are fairies in our flower garden,” I told him.

“They have taken me to some kind of fairyland that is like nothing I have ever seen before.”

He looked at me with a very puzzled look as though I was crazy. “There are no such things as fairies Mazy.”

“Oh yes, they are flying all around me while I am sitting there reading my book,” I said.

Charlie let me know he didn't think I was seeing fairies and was very puzzled about a fairyland. He would not come over.

I couldn't believe it. No one will come and see for themselves that I am telling the truth. Maybe Joanie, Anna, and Rachael will come to see them. I was getting frustrated.

I went back over to my house. I walked to the backyard to sit down on the bench. Maybe I was wrong, and maybe my mind was playing tricks on me. Or it could be butterflies I am seeing. But, no, there they were like they were waiting on me. Beautiful fairies with multicolored wings were everywhere.

Sitting there a while longer, I decided this would be my little secret. No one else needed to know about it. Maybe the fairies were just for me anyway.

The colors of their wings were like pearls, their hair was gold and silver, and each one's skin looked like a china doll. I wish I could capture one to have with me all the time. How nice that would be.

“Mazy,” Dad yelled. “Come on inside. It is time to eat.”

I slowly raised my head off the bench, blinked my eyes, and started to get up onto my feet. A beautiful butterfly was flying around my face. Looking around, I could see that there were lots of butterflies. There were no fairies. It was all a dream, and what a dream it was. It was vivid and seemed so real.

Closing my book, I got up off the bench and went on into the house. Feeling a little groggy and maybe even silly for thinking the fairies were real, I sat down at the kitchen table to eat with Mom and Dad. I turned my head to look out the window and smiled.

“What are you smiling about, Mazy?” Mom asked.

“Oh, nothing,” I told her. “I was just thinking about the nice time I had out in the flower garden reading my book.”

Chapter 7

The Birdhouse

March had come in like a lion with its blustery winds and colder temperatures. I woke up to the sun shining but realized that it was cold outside. I grabbed my coat to go pick up the paper on the sidewalk for Dad. A robin was sitting in the yard near the lilac bush.

I watched the robin for a couple of minutes while picking up the paper and trying not to move fast to scare it away. I looked on the other side of the yard, and more robins were pecking at the ground. Hopefully seeing robins meant that spring was near. I knew it would not be too far away now.

THE ROBINS IN MY BIRDHOUSE

I slipped back into the house, laid the paper on the kitchen counter, and took off my coat. I had goosebumps from the chill. Since there was no school, I curled up into a chair in the living room to watch TV. The big picture window was right in front of me, so I could watch the world go by as I was sitting there.

Dad poured himself a glass of orange juice and asked if I wanted some.

“Sounds good, Dad,” I said.

Mom came into the kitchen and started preparing some breakfast.

My thoughts went back to last year when Dad had made me a big birdhouse to hang outside in a tree.

He fixed it big enough for the robins to make it their home. After they moved in, I watched them for weeks. I knew it wouldn't be long before tiny baby birds would be sticking their heads out. And they did.

I settled into watching one of my favorite TV shows while waiting to eat. The phone rang. It was one of my friends.

“Hello, Anna,” I said. “How are you this morning?”

“Fine and glad there is no school today,” she answered.

“Me too,” I said.

“Well, I just had a great idea,” said Anna. I just wanted to see what you think about it.”

“Sure, go ahead,” I told her.

She said her mom was helping to raise money for the music department. She wanted to know if I would help pass out some flyers in the neighborhood. I agreed to do that, and we decided Saturday was a good time to start.

We discussed all kinds of things during that conversation. Finally, we started talking about the coming of spring. I told Anna about the robins out in front of my house. She told me the same thing. As we were on the phone, I could see more and more robins in the front yard outside. I could see the entire front area where the birds were coming and going. and hoped they would stay to use that birdhouse again this year as their home.

“Anna,” I said. “Would you like to go shopping for a birdhouse?”

“Sure, that sounds like fun,” Anna replied. “I love to watch the birds too, and maybe a birdhouse is just what I need. I remember last year, all of the robins in our yards. They were all over the place. I like watching lots of different kinds of birds. Don't you?”

“Yes, I do,” I replied.

So we got permission to go downtown and look for a birdhouse for Anna. We stopped by to pick up Rachael

because Anna wanted her to go with us. We found one that looked like an old barn. It was in a craft store on the corner of Taylor and Main Street. Anna bought it and took it home. It was fascinating. I knew the birds would love that house. Anna put it in a maple tree in her side yard close to her bedroom window. When I got back to my house, I went to the garage to fetch my birdhouse and hung it in the tree in the front yard.

A couple of weeks went by, I hadn't noticed that the birdhouse had some activity around it. There were robins, two to be exact, landing on the birdhouse. I then realized that some of them had stayed and were building a nest for their eggs. They would be safe in my birdhouse.

I watched as time went on to see if there was a chance to get a glimpse of the new little robins. I did get a peek at them as they got old enough to stick their heads out of the hole. As they grew, they came out onto the front step, and I could see they were trying to fly. Birds are fascinating to me.

Mom and I go bird watching in a small patch of woods behind our house sometimes. We take our binoculars and go out for several hours. I hoped we could do that again soon.

One dark day, Dad and I sat on the front porch to visit with each other. Clouds were gathering, and it looked like a storm was on its way. We didn't stay out very long. As we got back inside the house, the storm hit. The rain was pouring down with winds blowing all the branches on the trees sideways. I was worried about the birdhouse and went to the front door to watch as it blew back and forth. The storm lasted a long time, with steady rain hitting the roof of our house.

“Oh, Dad,” I said. What is going to happen to the birds?”

“I know it is rocking back and forth,” he said. "But, I think it is secure enough to withstand this wind.”

“I just want the birds to be alright,” I told him.

I pushed back tears and agreed with what he had said. We watched it go back and forth while the lightning flashed over and over. It rained hard, and then small pellets of hail started coming down. I looked across the street to see the hail bouncing off of Charlie's roof. Some of his lights were on, and it looked like he was standing at his bedroom window.

“You need to step away from the door,” Dad told me.

I went to my bedroom, wrapped up in a blanket, and eventually fell asleep. When I woke up, it was morning. The sun was shining, and there was no more rain or hard wind. Jumping up out of bed, I ran to the living room and looked out to see if the birdhouse was still hanging from the tree.

It was bent and hanging sideways. The storm, with all of its wind, had twisted it from its original spot. I turned to tell Mom and Dad. Then I went out to get a closer look at it. I could see the wind had taken off a huge chunk of the left side of the roof, and the front step where the birds perched was hanging off. I turned to see Dad walking up behind me.

“Is it damaged?” he asked me.

“Well, there is a chunk of the roof gone, Dad,” I said. “And just look at it. I don’t know where the birds are either.”

Charlie could see us out in the front yard and ran over to ask me what was going on.

“Well, Charlie,” I said. “My birdhouse with a family of robins living in it has been torn up by the storm we had last night.”

"Oh," I can see that," Charlie replied. "If you need me to help you fix it up, come get me." He ran back across the street, onto the porch, and into his front door.

"Let me get a closer look," Dad said. "I don't see any sign of the birds, and I am sure the babies were already flying on their own. They may have just flown off. With that storm whipping their house back and forth, I don't blame them."

He inspected it closer and said he could fix it up like new.

"Okay," I told him. "Do you think the birds will come back? They are by far my favorite birds, and I want them to use this house for as long as they need it."

"I can't say for sure, but I don't think they will be back this year," Dad said.

I called Anna to make sure her birdhouse was alright. She said she ran out and brought it into her house when the storm started because it didn't have any birds living in it.

Later during the summer, Dad fixed our birdhouse. We gave it a new fresh coat of paint to make it even more beautiful. Then, we moved it back into the garage.

Robins will always have a special place in my heart. They are such darling creatures, and they are fun to watch. Plus, the newly decorated birdhouse will be waiting for them.

Eventually, summer was gone, fall was upon us, and I knew the robins had moved on for the Winter.

The little empty birdhouse will be ready for another family of birds to occupy it in the Spring.

