

THE SWITCHER

CHAPTER 3

Ben couldn't help it. He barked.

"Rocky?" his mum called from behind the door. "Are you stuck in there?"

Nell sighed. "Ben, just do your best to act like a dog. Rocky, stop panting and act like a boy.

Quickly, put the dog collar on Ben."

Nell opened the door.

"Oh hello," said Ben's mum, looking embarrassed. She had just been about to peer through the letter box. "I'm Sally. I was looking for Ben and a neighbour thought she'd seen him climb into your garden."

"Hello," said Nell. Before she could say anything else, Rocky burst past her.

"Mum, I've missed you!" he yelled. Throwing his arms around her, he gave her a big kiss.

"Ben!" Her cheeks went pink and she giggled. "It's lovely to see you too, but what are you doing here?"



“Rocky managed to get into my garden and Ben was rescuing him. They were just leaving,” Nell said.

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” Ben’s mum apologised. “I’ll make sure it doesn’t happen again.”

“No harm done,” Nell smiled. She bent down, pretending to tickle Ben’s ears. “Come back in a week,” she whispered. “Everything will be fine.”

Ben seriously doubted it, but he had no choice. He trotted back home with Rocky and his mum.

“You need to be more careful with Rocky,” said his mum. “He’s only a little dog and you’d be really upset if you lost him. Make sure you keep all the gates closed in future.”

“I’m really, really sorry.” Rocky hung his head in shame. His big eyes looked terribly sad.

“Oh Ben,” said his mum, hugging Rocky. “It’s not as bad as that.” A tear rolled down Rocky’s cheek. “Cheer up, I’m sure you’ll take better care in future. Why don’t you get yourself some of my special chocolate cake?” Rocky kissed her again.

Ben couldn’t believe it. What happened to his mum’s strict rule of no sweets or cakes in-between meals? He followed Rocky into the kitchen.

“I can’t believe Mum’s giving you cake Rocky,” he growled.

“Sorry Ben. I’d give you some too, but dogs aren’t allowed chocolate. At least, that’s what your dad keeps saying.” Rocky sat down on the floor.

“You need to stop doing that,” Ben growled. “Go and sit on a chair.”

“Sorry,” mumbled Rocky, spitting cake crumbs. “What shall we do now Ben?”

Ben thought about his computer, his comic books and his Lego; he wouldn’t be able to play with any of those things and it wouldn’t be much fun watching Rocky play with them. He flopped his head down onto his front paws. “We could go in the garden,” he barked.

“Great!” Rocky bounced up. “I love being outside. Let’s go!”

Ben sighed, but it sounded more like a yelp. Out they went.

“Whoohoo!” yelled Rocky and took a running jump at the trampoline. He caught his foot on the side and landed on his bottom. “Ow,” he said.

Ben ran over. “You have to climb on through that gap,” he barked. “You don’t start jumping until you’re actually on the trampoline.”

“I know.” Rocky frowned. “I’ve always been able to jump on it before. I guess that now I’m a boy I can’t jump as high anymore.” Rocky sighed. “I’ve become like a Labrador.”

“When I was a boy, I could jump high,” growled Ben.

“Of course, you could.” Rocky patted him. “Could you jump over that?” He pointed to a fence at the bottom of the garden.

“No,” Ben woofed.

“I used to be able to,” said Rocky.

Ben thought for a moment. “Then how come you couldn’t sit when I asked you to or give me your paw?” he barked.

“I’m sorry Ben,” Rocky said sadly. “I really, really wanted to obey you. It’s just, most of the things you asked me to do were a bit... boring... and I used to get distracted and think about other things. Like pork chops.”

‘Actually, those things were pretty boring,’ Ben thought.

“You could do it now,” Rocky said.

“What, sit and give you my paw?” barked Ben.

“No!” Rocky laughed. “Jump really high.”

Ben eyed the fence.

“Go on Ben. You can do it,” Rocky encouraged him. “Run as fast as you can, then... jump.”

It was very tempting. It couldn’t hurt to have a try. Ben began to run. His four paws pounded over the grass. Wind whistled over his ears. ‘This is amazing,’ he thought. The garden whizzed past him. ‘I’m flying!’ Ben reached the fence and leapt over. He landed on the pavement panting, his tail thumping hard.

“Brilliant, isn’t it?” said Rocky over the fence. “Now use your back legs to scramble back over.”



“That was incredible,” Ben yapped. “What else can I do?”

“One of my favourites is digging,” Rocky said. “I’ve dug some massive holes in the flower beds. I’m really fast. Come on.”

Ben ran to the flower beds, then stopped.

“What’s the matter?” Rocky asked.

“I’ve got a funny feeling,” Ben growled. “Actually, I think I need the toilet.”

“Oh,” said Rocky. “Don’t worry. I have a perfect tree I always use. You just lift your back leg and—”

"I'm not using a tree!" snapped Ben.

"Why not?" asked Rocky. "I always do."

"I can't." Ben felt really uncomfortable. "Anyone could see me."

"But remember what Nell said. You're supposed to be a dog. No one will care," said Rocky.

"I care," barked Ben.

"Where are you going?" called Rocky.

"To use the toilet," Ben answered.

He ran through to the bathroom and nudged the door open with his nose. 'Good,' he thought, 'no one is around.' Ben eyed the toilet. 'I just have to work out how to get on.'

He tried to climb up but kept slipping. Feeling desperate, he looked around the bathroom and had an idea. He jumped and landed in the sink. From the sink, he jumped onto the toilet and then carefully slid onto the seat. Using all four paws, he managed not to slip.

'Phew,' he thought with relief.

He was almost finished when the door swung open. There stood his dad. "Sally!" Dad yelled.

"Come quickly. You are not going to believe this!"