

Kate, the ghost dog

Coping With the
Death of a Pet



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Chapter 1

A Girl's Best Friends



Friday afternoon, as soon as school let out, Aleta and her best friends, Cassie and Nina, raced on rollerblades to her house. As usual, Cassie won. She was one of the best athletes in the school. Tapping her foot impatiently, Cassie waited until they caught up to her at Aleta's front gate before crowing: "LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE ROLLERBLADE CHAMPION OF THE WORLD: CASSIEEEEE MOORE!"

She triumphantly raised her hands in the air and hopped up and down, cupping her hands around her mouth to mimic a crowd roar. Then she broke into her signature silly dance. Aleta and Nina ignored her at first, but before long they tackled her and they all tumbled to the ground, laughing giddily. Not only was Cassie's laugh contagious, just watching her was hilarious. Cassie was a redhead with a face sprinkled with freckles that seemed to move whenever she talked. And when she laughed, her face scrunched up, tears flew, and she hugged her stomach like she was in pain. Pretty soon all three girls were holding their stomachs from laughing so hard.

After a while, Aleta asked, "How come Kate's not barking? She hates the sound of rollerblades."

"Yeah, I was wondering the same thing," Cassie said, wiping her tears away.

"Oh, she's probably asleep in the house," Nina replied. "Hey, you guys want to get some ice cream?"

"Ooooooh, that sounds really good," Aleta said, rubbing her hands.

Cassie's eyes widened. "Yeah, I want the chocolate peanut butter crunch!"

"I want the mint yogurt," Nina said, closing her eyes and licking her lips.

"Well let's go!" Cassie shouted, spinning on her skates.

"Wait, Cassie! I have to take Kate on a walk first," Aleta said, opening the gate.

Cassie grabbed the fence to stop herself. "Let's take her with us! She likes ice cream, too."

"Loves it," Aleta chuckled. "Come on. Let's get her. But you guys have to take off your skates before you come inside the house."

"Okay. When we come back, can we play fashion show?" Nina asked as she sat on the ground and unstrapped her rollerblades. Nina was really pretty with wavy brown hair.

She planned on being a super model when she grew up, that or a fashionista.

"Again?" Cassie groaned.

"Oh, come on, Cass. You know it's fun. We can dress Kate up again and put sunglasses on

her. Then we'll make a runway for her to walk down after a hair makeover."

"You mean a fur makeover," Cassie laughed.

"Whatever...It will be fun. You can be our fashion photographer for the model shoot."

"I don't want to be that kind of photographer. And besides, I'm not going to be a photographer until I win my Olympic gold medals in track."

"You can still practice. And since Aleta's going to be a



*Kate was a
real diva.*

veterinarian, she can be our in-house doctor and make sure our model is healthy and eating right."

"I don't know...Kate's a real diva," Aleta joked.

Cassie raised her eyebrows. "Uh, oh, she might mistake me for paparazzi and try to bite me!"

"That's okay. We have a doctor in the house for emergencies."

"Uh, uh...I'm a vet. I only work on animals, not humans."

"That's harsh! Then I guess you'll have to run, Cassie. At least you'll be in shape for the Olympics," Nina laughed.

Cassie clapped her hands. "Great! I love it when she chases me!"

They passed Aleta's mom and dad watching TV and reading the paper in the living room.

"Hey, girls," Aleta's mom said.

"Hi!" the girls yelled back.

"What are you up to, Aleta?"

"We're taking Kate with us to get some ice cream!"

The sound on the TV lowered and Aleta's dad peered over his newspaper. "Fine, just don't give her any ice cream. It's not good for dogs. The last time you did that I had to clean up after her. And that was no party."

The girls cringed as they looked at each other. Cassie pinched her nose and suppressed a giggle.

"Okay, Daddy. Um, do you know where Kate is?" Aleta asked, jingling her leash.

"Last I checked, she was sleeping in your bedroom," he said and went back to his paper.

Chapter 2

The Worst Day Ever

Aleta whistled loudly and jingled the leash again as they walked down the hall to her bedroom. *That's weird*, Aleta thought. Usually once Kate heard the leash she was jumping at her heels, barking, growling, and playfully grabbing it with her mouth. Aleta hoped her little brother, Darnell, hadn't accidentally left the gate open again. The last time he did that she was furious with him. Luckily, their neighbors spotted Kate wandering down the sidewalk and brought her home.

Aleta was relieved to find Kate lying at the foot of her bed.

"There you are. Get up, girl! Time for a walk."

But she didn't move. Suddenly, Aleta's stomach felt queasy.



"What's wrong with her?" Cassie asked in a hushed voice.

"There's nothing wrong with her, Cassie," Aleta said.

"Kate, come on...wake up...walkeeeee...walkeeeee!" she said frantically.

Nothing.

Nina leaned over Kate. "She's not moving I think she's d—"

"Shut up, Nina! You don't know what you're talking about. Move out the way!" snapped Aleta.

Aleta didn't really mean to snap at Nina. It just kind of slipped out. Nina stepped back and clung to Cassie's arm. Tears ran down Cassie's cheeks. This time it wasn't from laughter.

Aleta's face tightened. *Cassie and Nina are being so stupid!*

"KATE!" Aleta yelled, stomping her feet to get Kate's attention.

Kate didn't wiggle or even twitch like she ordinarily did when she was sleeping. Her chest wasn't rising or falling either. Aleta could feel herself getting more anxious.

"Kate, please get up," Aleta pleaded softly. Trembling, she bent down and gently shook Kate's body. Aleta was so shocked to feel how stiff it was that she fell backwards. "Mommy! Daddy!" Aleta screamed. "Something's wrong with Kate!"

Her parents raced into the bedroom.

"What is it, honey?" Aleta's dad asked, panicked.

They kneeled down beside Aleta, and her mom said, "Oh no...poor Kate...looks like she's been here awhile. Oh honey, I'm so sorry..."

Aleta didn't want to hear that. Kate was fine when she left for school that morning. How did this happen? It didn't make sense.

Aleta couldn't give up on her. "Kate, please don't die... please..."

Aleta's mom turned to her, eyes tearing. "Baby, I'm sorry... she's gone."

"No she's not! We need to take her to a vet. She'll be okay. You'll see."

She tugged on her dad's arm. "Why are we wasting time? We need to take her to a doctor. NOW!" she sobbed.

No one said a word. They just stared at her. Aleta didn't understand. *How can they just stand there and do nothing? Don't they realize that Kate's not dead? She's sleeping and alive! Why doesn't anyone believe me? Don't they want to save Kate?*

Her dad caressed her shoulder. "It's too late, Aleta."

"No it's not! She's still alive! You guys are lying to me! She's not dead!"

Aleta pushed his hand away and wrapped her arms around Kate. She kissed and hugged her so tightly her dad had to gently pull Aleta's arms from around her furry neck. She didn't want to let go. She couldn't.

Aleta cried so hard she buried her head into her dad's chest and fell into his big strong arms.