



MARK THE GERMAN SHEPHERD



LOLA THE BORDER COLLIE

FOUR GREAT FRIENDS

By

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This is a story of two young girls
called Eve and Leah who helped
two small puppies to grow up
and become great dogs.

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To

EVE AND LEAH

This story begins one day in winter when Eve and Leah, who were the very best of friends, were walking home from the park.

Eve was talking to Leah about a little cat she had at home called Toots. Eve loved all animals and wished she could take her cat for a walk just like a dog.

Suddenly she shouted loudly to her friend,

“Why don’t we get a dog to walk and play with in the fields close to our houses?”

“Great idea,” Leah shouted back. In fact she shouted so loudly that two people walking past almost jumped out of their skins in fright. “Let’s ask our mums!”

The girls rushed home in great excitement, and each one told her mum about their wonderful idea.

“Sorry,” said Eve’s mum, “We already have a cat, and I have to work all day, and you have to go to school, so there would be nobody to look after a dog during the day. Besides, the cat and dog would only fight with each other.”

Leah’s mum said the same thing, even though they didn’t have a cat. She said no because it might bark all night and keep everyone awake.

“Maybe later, when you are grown up you will be better able to look after a dog. Dogs need to be walked, groomed and given fresh food and water every day. We just don’t have the time for that now.”

The two girls protested, pleaded, and tried their best to coax their mums to change their minds, but the mums would not give in.

Next day they met after school and told each other what had happened at home.

The girls were very sad, but they knew they had to do as their mums told them. For weeks afterwards they played in the fields and pretended to each have their own dog. They even brought along a tennis ball and threw it, pretending that it was for a dog to run and fetch.

One day in the spring the girls were playing their game with the ball when suddenly a small dog, no bigger than a puppy, ran from a ditch in the field and caught the ball in its mouth. However,

instead of bringing it to the girls, it ran off back into the ditch.

“Did you see that?” screamed Leah, “It was a dog, a real live dog who took the ball and ran off with it!!!”

“I did see it,” said Eve quietly, almost not believing her own eyes. “Well, what are we standing here for? Let’s go after it.” the two girls shouted together.

They made their way across the field to the ditch. It was covered with grass and nettles. A small stream was winding its way down the middle.

The girls looked down into the ditch but there was no sign of any dog. They called and whistled, but there was no response.

“Maybe we just imagined it,” said Eve.

“Don’t be silly! Both of us couldn’t have imagined it at the same time.”

They searched and searched though the grass and the nettles until their legs and arms were scratched and sore.

“We’ll have to give up,” said Leah, almost in tears. “Besides, it’s getting dark now, and our mums will be worrying about where we are.”

“Yes, I know,” agreed Eve. “We had better go home.” Reluctantly they started walking back, chatting all the way about the little dog who had stolen the ball. They made a pact between them, to meet every day after school, and go together into the field to look for the pup.

“IT JUST HAS TO BE HERE” exclaimed Eve
“Yes, it must be around somewhere”
agreed Leah.

The girls could hardly wait until school was over to go and look for this little dog which seemed to simply disappear.

At home they made sure they both put on old jeans, so that the nettles couldn't sting their legs, and old jumpers with long sleeves, again so as not to get stung or cut by the brambles in the ditch.

There were four more hours of sunlight left, and the girls ran the whole way, so as not to waste any time. Eve remembered to bring another tennis ball just in case the dog would come out again.

When they got to the ditch Eve made a decision.

“We will throw the ball now, and then we’ll keep very quiet.” Eve threw the ball as far as she could, and it landed close to the ditch. They waited but no little dog arrived. Leah got down on her hands and knees and sneaked right up to the ball. She didn’t want to frighten the little dog, if it did appear. Leah lifted the ball and threw it again, this time it fell right into the dirty ditch and into a bunch of nettles.

“OH NO!!” shouted Eve, “We’ll never get it back out again.”

Suddenly the nettles started to move and they heard a rustling sound in the ditch. The girls looked at each other. “It must be him,” they both whispered. “I’m going in among the nettles no matter what,” said Eve. “Me too,” agreed Leah.

The two girls crawled into the ditch. The nettles tried to sting, and the brambles tried to scratch, but their jeans and long sleeved jumpers prevented them from getting hurt.

Suddenly, right in front of them, was the cutest little puppy they had ever seen. It was really dirty from living in the ditch. Eve lifted it up in her arms. She could feel its tiny bones because it was so skinny. It looked as if it had not been fed for days.

“Where are its mum and dad?” wondered Leah.

“I don’t know. They must be around here somewhere,” answered Eve.

Leah turned to climb out of the ditch when her foot hit on something soft. She

looked down, and there was the pup's mother. She had been hurt.

"What can we do to help her?" asked Eve.

"I really don't know what to do, but I think we should tell someone who might be able to rescue her."

"I know what we'll do. We'll phone the vet, or the police, or a doctor, or mum," said Eve.

"Good idea," agreed, Leah. "Who should I contact?"

"Phone them all! Tell them this is an emergency," exclaimed Eve.

Leah did just that. The first to arrive at the scene was the police, with their blue lights flashing, and their sirens blaring. Behind them came the vet, in a white van

with a red light, followed by an ambulance, with a doctor on board. Finally Leah's mum arrived behind all the emergency vehicles.

"Where's the injured person?" asked the police man. "I'm a doctor!" announced the next man, dressed in a white coat.

"What's all this commotion Leah?" asked her mum, who was not at all pleased to be brought away from work.

"There's a dog in the ditch. It's this little pup's mum, and she seems to be hurt. She needs help right now!" explained Leah.

"A DOG!" shouted the police man,

"A DOG" shouted the doctor.

"A DOG!!" shouted Leah's mum.

“You have brought all the emergency services here, into a field, for a DOG!!” screamed mum. “You’re both in very big trouble now.”

“Not so fast,” they heard a voice saying. It was the vet, “They did well to contact us. An injured animal deserves to be helped. It can feel as much pain as you do, you know. I’ll take both it and the pup to my surgery in the town. I think I can sort her out. But it looks fairly serious. The poor creature must have been hit by a car, and crawled along the field and into the ditch, where she gave birth to this little fellow.”

The vet phoned next morning. It was Leah who answered the call. She had been awake most of the night, worrying about the two dogs.

“Hello,” she said. The voice at the other end of the line sounded very deep and troubled.

“Is your mum at home please? It’s the vet speaking. I need to have a word with her.”

“Hello Mrs Johnson, it’s about the dogs your daughter found yesterday in the ditch.”

“Yes? What is happening to them?”

“Well it is both good and bad news. I’m afraid that the pup’s mother died. I could not save her, as she was too badly injured. However the pup is very strong and healthy. Do you want me to bring it over to you? Or will you collect it?” asked the vet.

“I didn’t want a dog!” said Mrs Johnson.

“Right,” said the vet, “I will have to have it put down, as I can’t have stray dogs wandering around the roads. Goodbye for now Mrs Johnson. If you change your mind before Friday, please let me know.”

Leah was listening to the conversation beside her mum.

“YOU CAN’T, YOU JUST CAN’T let that little pup be destroyed. PLEASE, OH PLEASE MUM let me have it. I promise I will look after it forever!!”

“Well I am not sure. I will have to think it over. .”

“THANK YOU, THANK YOU MUM. You are the greatest mum in the world!” shouted Leah.

Leah ran to get her mobile and phoned Eve.

“Guess what Eve? I am getting to keep the puppy. The mother died and there is no one to look after it.”

“OH that’s wonderful,” answered Eve - as soon as Leah stopped squealing with excitement. “I’m so pleased for you.”

Once Eve came off the phone the tears started. She would have loved to have the pup too. “Maybe we can share it?” she thought to herself.

The next morning Mrs Johnson had thought it over and phoned the vet.

“We are willing to keep the pup, and we’ll give it a good home.”

“That’s good,” said the vet. He would never have destroyed the pup, but he knew that she would change her mind once she thought that that would happen!!!

“Your little girl really deserves that dog after rescuing it. By the way, what is the other little girl doing? She also rescued the pup. Do you think she might be allowed a puppy too? I have another little fellow here that nobody wants. It is a pure white German shepherd dog. Everyone wants black ones, or black and white, but this one is white all over, and I think it is a lovely dog. Will you ask her for me please?”

“I certainly will,” replied Mrs Johnson.
“I’m sure she would love to have it. Then

the two girls could walk their dogs happily together”

Next day Leah and her mum went to the vet’s to collect the pup. It was in a very comfortable cage, with some water and food in one corner, and some straw in the other corner for its toilet. The vet was very pleased to see them, and brought out the little pup. He placed the dog into Leah’s arms and she cried with happiness.

“What sort of a dog is this?” asked her mother.

“It’s a very strong breed of Border Collie. In fact I think it may even be a pedigree.” answered the vet. “So what have you decided to call her?” he asked Leah.

“Goodness,” said Leah, “I did not think it was a lady dog.” Leah thought for a few

minutes. “I know!” she exclaimed, “I will call her LOLA.”

The vet then asked if they would like to see the little white German shepherd puppy.

“We would love too!” they both answered together. The vet took them into another room and there was the most adorable ball of white fur lying beside a big log fire.

“I would keep this dog myself, but I already have two others of my own, and three would be just too many. I don’t think my wife would be very happy with another one. Will you tell your friend? Then she can name this one. But do remember to tell her that it will grow into a very large dog, and will need plenty of

space to run and exercise. Well now, good luck with your own pup, Leah.”

They left the vet’s surgery and went straight home. Leah couldn’t wait to tell Eve all that had happened and to let her see the pup again.

As soon as Eve heard the news she came straight over to Leah’s house. The two girls hugged and kissed Lola for a good while. Leah then explained to her about the little ball of white fluff in the vet’s kennel. It needed a home too. Just like Lola.

As soon as Eve went home she spoke to her mum about the puppy. She explained to her how good it would be to have a dog like Leah had. That way they could go for walks together.

“Ok, Ok,” said Christine, who was Eve’s mum. “You may have a dog, but like Leah you will have to take care of it. I have enough to do every day looking after both you and Lewis!!”

“Don’t worry mum. I promise I will. Can we go to the vet’s tomorrow to collect it?” asked Eve.

“Yes. I’m off work tomorrow. We can go to see the pup, and bring Leah with us, and she can bring Lola too, if she wants to.”

The two families met at the vet’s surgery at eleven o’clock next morning, as they had arranged earlier.

“Come in please,” the vet said when he opened the door. “I believe you have come to look at my little ball of fluff. You

do understand that he will be a VERY large dog, and will need lots of food and exercise.”

“Yes I understand,” said Eve, “I will do everything I can to keep him happy.”

“So, what are you going to call him, Eve?” asked the vet.

“I think I’ll call him MARK. I like that name. It sounds like a very strong dog’s name!”

“Well, it certainly is a great name. I hope that Lola, Mark, Eve, and Leah will always be great friends, and have lots of fun together. Now if any of you need some help to look after your dogs please feel free to call on me. I’ll be glad to be of free assistance.”

The two families left the vet's surgery and drove to their different homes.

Leah put Lola to bed after feeding her a tasty dog dinner, and told her a story before she went to sleep.

Eve was also putting her little pup to sleep by singing a lullaby and thinking about tomorrow's fun.

As soon as school was over Eve and Leah put leads on their dogs and went for a walk in the nearby fields. They had to walk slowly as the dogs were still very small pups.



Mark as a puppy



LOLA as a puppy.

They all played with tennis balls and chased each other around the field. But the pups soon got tired and wanted to sleep. Eve and Leah were very kind to the dogs and carried them home.

As time passed the pups got bigger and stronger, and could play much longer with the girls. Sometimes it was the girls who got tired, and had to go home for some rest. The four became great friends and went everywhere together. One day they were playing in a park when a strange looking man starting asking questions about Lola.

“Is that your dog?” he asked Leah.

“Yes, of course she is. She’s my best friend, next to Eve,” answered Leah.

“It’s a fine looking dog,” he said, and then turned to the person with him. Leah could hear him whisper to his friend –

“That dog could make us good money, if we could kidnap it without the girl seeing.”

“I’ll distract the girl while you grab the dog, Horace.” Leah was frightened. The other man, called Albert, talked to Leah so that Horace could steal Lola, without Leah noticing.

Horace made his move when he saw that Leah wasn’t looking. He grabbed Lola by the collar, and pulled her into the back seat of his car. Although Leah didn’t see what was happening - Mark did! He leapt up and caught the man’s hand between his teeth. It really hurt Horace, but Mark wouldn’t release his grip. If Mark had been fully grown he could have bitten the man’s hand off, but he was still a pup and wasn’t strong enough to hurt the man seriously and get him to let go of Lola.

Horace started the car as soon as Albert jumped in. Soon the two of them were off

with Lola, with the intention of selling her on for a high price.

Horace looked at his hand. It was bleeding as Mark had bitten the flesh just below his thumb.

“That dog really hurt me!” shouted Horace. “I’ll have to see a doctor.”

“At least this one seems to be quieter,” said Albert. Little did they know that Lola was working on a plan to free herself and get back to Leah!



Albert and Horace.

The two bad men who kidnapped Lola

They had been driving for over two hours. Lola felt the car going up a steep hill.

“I’ll attack as soon as we stop somewhere.” Sure enough at the top of the hill the car pulled to a stop.

Lola looked out of the window. She could see an old rusty barn.

“I suppose they are going to hold me prisoner in there, until they get the money they are hoping to make.”

The front door of the old car opened and the driver stepped outside.

“Right you miserable dog, get out and go into that barn.”

Albert also got out of the car and was walking towards the barn to open the door.

Lola wasn't having any of this.

“How dare he call me a miserable dog? I'm a very happy dog. Well at least I was, until these two rogues turned up.”

Lola saw her chance of escape when Horace bent over to tie his bootlace. Lola jumped out of the car and bit him on the bum.

“AAHHHHHH,” shouted Horace, “That was really sore, you horrible dog!”

Lola was now very angry, and bit him again on the ankle. This caused him fall to the ground in agony.

Lola jumped into the driver’s seat. She had been watching the driver while she was sitting on the back seat.

“This is easy,” she said to herself.

Lola accidentally hit the handbrake and it released the car. As it was at the top of a steep hill it started to roll down the other side. Faster and faster it went.

“Oh dear,” Lola barked, “What am I going to do now?”

The car was now rushing towards a sharp bend in the road. Lola pulled at the steering wheel with all her might. She had seen the driver turn the wheel when he came to a corner, so she did the same. The car’s tyres screeched as it rounded the bend.

“Phew, that was close,” breathed Lola.

But she wasn’t out of trouble yet. The hill got much steeper when she rounded the next bend. In front of her she could see the sea. On and on went the car. It was all far too fast for Lola to control anymore. There was another bend ahead.

“I won’t survive this one!” thought Lola. She was right. The car crashed into a gate

with a terrible thud. Poor Lola was thrown out of the front window and over a cliff. She splayed out her four legs, and started to sail down towards the sea. Two gulls looked on in amazement as Lola flew past.

“It must be a bird/dog, or something.”

“I have never seen anything like it before!!” said the other gull.

Although the flying experience was fun, Lola was a bit worried about where she was going to land. She saw a small fishing boat at sea and thought it might be a good idea to get close to that, as she had never learnt to swim. Suddenly she landed with a splash.

“OH that’s cold and salty,” Lola thought, as she hit the water. “Now where is that boat?” Lola looked all around. Yes. Now

she could see it just behind her. The two men in the boat couldn't believe their eyes.

“What **IS** that Joe? A flying dog?

“Or a dog fish?” the other man wondered.

“Best pull it in, whatever it is. I think it's struggling quite a bit.”

Lola was swimming towards the boat, but as she had never been in deep water before she was very frightened, and really glad to see that the men were ready to help her into the boat.

Lola tried to tell the men what had happened, but unfortunately it just came out as “Bark, bark, bark, bark,” and more barking. She gave up sadly, and gave herself a good shake to help dry off a little.



The two men fishing in a boat

Although Lola couldn't talk to the men, she (and all dogs) can understand what is being said to them. So she heard the men saying,

"I wonder where she comes from and what her address is. What are we going to do with her?"

The men had finished fishing and were heading home. They offered Lola some fish, but even though she was thankful, she turned it down. She really did not like any kind of fish, except perhaps a little from the fish and chip shop. Leah would often share some of hers. This caused her to think about Leah.

“Will I ever see her again? I’m sure she’s very sad - maybe even crying because I am missing. And what about Mark?” She had become very fond of Mark. In fact she thought she could be a little bit in love with him!

“Oh dear, I am sure they are all looking for me. I just want to go home. I’m so frightened. What is going to happen to me?”

On that last thought there was a bump, as the little boat came ashore. Lola heard the men say,

“That was a good day’s fishing. We caught plenty of fish, AND a dog!”

The other man started to laugh.

“Portmuck will be pleased with our catch.”

“Portmuck,” Leah wondered, “Where in the world is Portmuck? What a very strange name. I hope it isn’t all muddy. I don’t want to get my paws really dirty.”

Back home Leah and all her family were searching for Lola, as were Eve’s family - her brother Lewis, her mum Christine, and her brother Robbie. Liz and Chris, her grandparents were also part of the team, as of course was Mark. He led the way

with his nose to the ground trying to follow Lola's scent. Mark was able to follow the scent until she was pulled into the car and then he could not follow it any more. They told the police about Lola who assured them that they would keep a look out for her.

The families made "LOST" posters with pictures of Lola, and got them delivered all around Ballyclare, where they lived. They knocked on many doors, hoping that someone would have seen her - but no one did. With sad hearts the families went home and resigned themselves to the thought that Lola had run off and gone forever. Leah cried and cried for days. Eve tried to cheer her up by bringing Mark to her house, wanting to go for walks with her. But that only made things worse.

Every time she saw Mark it reminded her of Lola, and she started to cry again.

Almost two weeks had passed. Eve was staying with her grandparents in Islandmagee. It was a nice day and Liz though it would be a good idea to go to Portmuck (which was close by) and have a picnic. Chris agreed, and so they all got into the jeep to head for the port. Eve and Mark were playing on the beach while Liz was setting up the picnic. All of a sudden Mark lifted his nose up into the air and started to go towards some caves.

“Where are you going Mark?” shouted Eve. “I was enjoying playing with you on the beach.” But Mark didn’t stop. He kept running towards the caves, along the grassy patch above the beach. Liz and Chris did their best to follow him. There

was an old disused Kiln, and Mark stopped at the entrance. He put his nose to the ground this time, and went in. The family waited outside to see what he was doing. Suddenly they heard a lot of barking. It was two dogs barking, not just one! Mark then appeared with Lola, limping and sore behind him.

“Quickly,” shouted Liz. “Let’s get this dog to the vet immediately.”

Eve phoned Leah straight away to tell her the good news. They all arranged to meet at the vet’s surgery in one hour. There was a lot of crying, but this time they were tears of joy. Lola was not seriously hurt. She had cut her leg and was very hungry, but besides that she was fine, and

jumped for joy when she saw Leah. They all went home together. Leah vowed that never again would they be parted - not even for one minute.

Everybody patted Mark, telling him about how clever he was to find Lola in the cave. The vet said that she might have died if she had been left in that damp cave, with no food for much longer. He even found a medal on a chain which said, **“I AM A CLEVER DOG”** He put it around Mark’s neck. Mark was very proud of his medal, and wore it everywhere he went. Although dogs cannot speak to humans, they can talk to each other. Lola told Mark about the two horrible men who kidnapped her, and how she had bitten one of them on the bum, and on the ankle.

“Huh, I would have bitten his head off, and if ever I do find him, I will.”

Lola went on to tell him about flying over the cliff, and the two fishermen who rescued her. She enjoyed explaining how she drove the car, and turned the corners all by herself.

The stories went on most of the night until Mark and Eve had to go home.

Next day Leah and Eve met after school. It was a very special day, it was the sixteenth of October, and the girls' birthdays - both of them were nine years old.

Their mums had organised a great party, and lots of their friends were invited. Everyone was having a lovely time. There were lots of cakes, buns and juice, followed by plenty super presents.

Mark and Lola were also at the party, and both of them could smell sausages on the table.

“I wonder if we could have some of those?” Mark barked to Lola.

“Why not, seeing as everyone else is having lots, and we don’t like cake or juice.”

“Shall we steal some?” Mark wondered.

“Oh no, we cannot do that. However if we accidently (on purpose) knock them onto the floor the adults won’t let the children

eat them, and instead they will give them to us.”

“That’s a very clever idea Lola - very clever indeed. Let’s do it now when nobody is looking.”

Mark, being bigger than Lola, pushed past the table and hit the plate of sausages with his tail. The plate fell onto the floor and the delicious sausages rolled all over the place. One of the children at the party bent down to lift some.

“No, No. You can’t eat that. It’s been on the floor. There could be germs on the sausages now,” said one of the mums. “I will have to give them to the dogs.”

She gathered up all the sausages into a bowl, and set it into the back garden. Lola

and Mark ran out after them, giggling all the way. Their plan had worked”

“Those humans are really silly. We can get what we want, when we want, without them knowing,” barked Mark and Lola.

The dogs were now full of sausages. There were still some left over, so Mark and Lola decided to hide them until next day. Lola buried hers near an old shed, and made sure she knew where to find them again, by rolling a stone over the hole she had dug.

Mark thought he would dig close to the hedge. He was now eight months old, and although he was not fully grown, he was getting to be a big strong dog. Lola was about the same age, but as with both dogs, nobody was exactly sure when they

were born. Lola was also growing, but not as much as Mark. She was a more gentle dog, yet full of mischief and fun. Mark was much more serious. He took no nonsense from other dogs, and would growl if he felt they were nasty.

Mark was still continuing to bury his sausages. He was digging very deep with his big strong paws, when suddenly he saw something shining in the dirt. Mark dug deeper, and there he saw more and more of these beautifully shiny objects.

“Lola, look at what I have found.”

“They seem really nice, but they are of no use to us if we can’t eat them.”

Mark agreed. “Let’s dig them all up, and bring them into the children as a birthday present.”

The dogs kept digging until they had all the shiny objects lifted out of the ground. They placed them very carefully into an old tin that they had found under the shed.

Mark was first into the house, with Lola right behind him. He carried the old tin, with the presents, up to Eve and Leah, who were playing games on the floor. He set the tin down gently beside them and looked into their eyes for some sign of pleasure.

Liz and Chris were the first to notice the tin with the shiny coins inside it.

“Where **DID** you get these?” they asked Mark and Lola.

“They are very old and rare coins, and worth a lot of money,” commented Chris.

The dogs took Liz and Chris into the garden and showed them where they found the coins. However they were both very careful not to reveal the hidden sausages, in case Liz might take them back. The sausages were much more important to the dogs than any shiny coins!!

When the party was over, and all the children had gone to bed, Liz, Chris and Lola's mum discussed what to do with the coins. They decided to bring them to an expert, who knew all about such things, and who could tell them what they were worth. As for the dogs they were both fast asleep and dreaming of munching lots more delicious sausages tomorrow.

They were all up early next morning, and after breakfast the whole family, dogs

included, went to town to see the person about the coins. The specialist examined the objects through his eye glass, and announces that they dated from the days when the Romans lived in this country. He went on to say they were rare and worth at least £1000.00. If the family wanted to sell them, he was willing to pay the money right away.

The adults talked it over with the girls and Lewis about what they should all do now. After all it was their dogs who had found the coins.

“We would like to sell them,” the children all agreed.

The £1000.00 was handed over, and divided between them. The children were very wise and all went straight to the

nearest bank to lodge their money. They did keep some back to have a Big Mac each, and to buy two really meaty bones for Lola and Mark. The dogs thought it might be their birthdays' now that they were given such a treat.



Two big meaty bones

Everyone was asleep in Eve's house, except Mark, who always slept with one eye open and his ears alert. Suddenly he heard a strange noise coming from the kitchen. Mark crept slowly from his bed, which was at the foot of Eve's, at the same time being very careful not to waken anyone.

Mark peered around the door of the kitchen and there he saw two burglars with big sacks over their shoulders. They were getting ready to steal all the household silver, and anything else of any value. Mark planned his next move very carefully. If he just jumped out at them and barked the burglars would simply run away.

So Mark got ready and mustered up the loudest bark he had ever heard.

“GROWL, BARK, BARK, BARK, GROWL, GROWL” went Mark, as he jumped straight at the two startled men. The men didn’t know where to turn, or what to do. In front of them was this pure white Alsatian, leaping, jumping, and barking all at once. The men were so frightened they dropped their sacks. Both of them tried to jump through the window at the same time. When they were half way through they got stuck, and started to shout. “Please let us out, we will never steal from anybody ever again.” However the worst was yet to come. All their cries woke Lola, who had been sleeping peacefully across the road where she lived. Lola liked to sleep in a kennel in the back garden. She jumped out of her kennel, ran the length of the garden, and jumped over the fence into Eve’s garden.

She ran up to where all the noise was coming from. Lola stopped and looked at the two burglars, hanging out of the window.

“It’s you pair again,” barked Lola, “I’m so glad to meet you again, only this time I AM going to bite your heads off.”

Lola told Mark that these were the two that had kidnapped her. “They were going to sell me to anybody who would pay enough money.”

“Is that right. Well maybe we should give them something to think about, should they ever try to kidnap a dog again.”

“I agree,” barked Lola, “Which one do you want first.”

“I’ll take the one in the green trousers.”

“Good. Let’s go,” growled the dogs.

The dogs got the hold of each man by their bums and bit hard. The men screamed. Luckily for them Liz and Chris came into the kitchen to see what all the commotion was about.

“Stop that at once!” shouted Liz. Chris phoned the police straight away and the men were taken to the station.

Later Chris, Liz, Leah, and her mum, Christine, Lewis, Eve, and the two dogs had a great laugh as they all sat around the fire that night. They thought about the two burglars trapped in the window and the dogs biting their backsides. It was hilarious.

When the girls were walking their dogs during the week, a man stopped them to ask if they knew the way to the dog show.

“I don’t know,” answered Eve.

“I didn’t even know there was a show, never mind where it is,” said Leah.

“Well, there is a dog show somewhere nearby. I thought that with you girls having two such fine dogs you would be taking them there.”

“When we go home we will tell our parents about the show, and see if we would be allowed to enter for it.”

Eve and Leah were very excited about the show, and hoped that they would be allowed to go along with the dogs. They

asked their mums as soon as they got home. The mums agreed that they should all go. They looked for details of the show in the local paper, and found it was to be held the next day, but the entries had to be in before six pm.

Eve's mum phoned the show organisers and booked the two dogs in for three different events.

One for the best groomed dog, another for the fastest runner, and the third for the cutest dog of the show. The show was to start at 10am next morning, so Eve and Leah were both up very early brushing and combing their two dogs.

Lola loved all the attention. She enjoyed the sweet smelling perfume from the bath water, and the beautiful pink bow

that Leah tied around her neck. She thought herself a real lady dog, and that any male dog would love to go out with her for a walk in the park.

Mark on the other hand hated all the fuss. He refused to get into the smelly bathwater, (as he called it) and as for bows around his neck there was no chance.

“I will go as I am,” he barked. “If they don’t like me the way I am, I don’t care.”

At the start of the show all the dogs were lined up in front of the judges, to be examined for the best groomed dog. The judges walked up and down past the twenty dogs lined up.

“This is a nicely groomed dog.” They pointed to a terrier, which then

proceeded to almost bite their hands off when they approached to pat it.

“Maybe not,” said one of the Judges.

“Let’s look at another dog.” They walked on a little further and stopped at Mark.

“This one is nice, but I don’t think he has had his coat groomed this morning.”

The next dog was Lola.

“What a lovely Border collie you are,” admired one of the judges.

Lola tried to smile, and held her head up high so the judges could get a good scent from her coat.

“You have been well groomed.”

“Your owner must love you very much,” added another judge.

After a few minutes chatting among themselves, the head judge announced,

“I declare this dog – Lola - to be the winner of the first heat. She is definitely the best groomed dog in the show.”

“The next competition is the five mile fastest runner race,” they heard over the loud speaker. “Would all dogs which are competing in this event, please line up in front of the judges.”

“You should be in this one Mark,” barked Lola.

“Ok, I’ll give it a go. I do feel like stretching my legs a little.”

“Oh, Mark, with those big long legs you are sure to win,” Lola whispered to him.

Eve was very proud of Mark when he walked up to the starting line. The judge took their names, and all the dogs got ready to race. There were thirty in the line up; four Alsatians, two terriers, one collie, one Springer, and the rest were all mongrels.

Mark looked at his opponents.

“This might be tougher than I thought. Those Alsatians’ look pretty fit, and so does that Springer.”

“The race is five miles long, over rough ground, all around the village. It will take a strong, fit dog to win,” announced the head judge over the loud speaker. “No cheating! My staff will be watching.”

“All dogs get ready now!” he shouted.

“Three, two, one - GO.”

The dogs all took off as fast as they could. Two of the mongrels ran into each other and fell over. That was those two out of the race. There were a black, and a black and white Alsatian running alongside Mark. On the outside was the Springer. It was going very quickly for such a smaller dog. The collie was close behind. The rest of the dogs were beginning to fall back.

As the dogs passed one of the judges he shouted, “ONE MILE.” then two, then three, then four. After four miles Mark looked around. The two Alsatians were still running close behind. The Springer was slowing and beginning to tire. The rest were slowing down, and most had dropped out.

“I’d better do something spectacular now,” thought Mark. “These two Alsatians could win, and that wee Springer has really got a lot of energy.”

Mark put an extra boost of power into his stride. He began to pull out in front of the others. Suddenly the Springer shot forward and went into the lead.

“How did he do that?” thought Mark. “He really is fast!”

Next along came the black and white Alsatian. It was his turn to turn on the power. He passed Mark and the Springer to go in front

“It’s any dog’s race now,” thought the judges. “Any of them could win.”

There was now only half a mile to go. All the dogs were getting out of breath and feeling very tired. It was telling on the Springer. Although he was fast he could not keep up the pace. He started to pant, and had to stop along the side of the road.

Now it was between the Alsatians. They were neck and neck. They could see the finishing line. The judge was standing there, and all the crowds were cheering.

Eve and Leah were jumping up and down shouting, "Come on Mark. Come on Mark."

Others owners were shouting for their dogs too. The noise was deafening.

The three dogs would not give in. They all gave their last burst of energy, going at

full speed. The finishing line was directly in front of them. Neck and neck they crossed over it. The crowd cheered and cheered. All three had won the race.

“Well done you three. You all gave it everything you could and you all deserve a medal. Each one of you is the greatest runner we have ever seen.” said the head Judge.

One of the mongrels won the last competition, which was for one the cutest dog in the show. Neither Leah nor Eve entered for it, although they were certain that their dogs would have won it too.

Leah and Eve were very proud as they walked their dogs towards the judges to receive their prizes.

First called up was Lola. She very proudly stepped up to the judge's box.

“Well done Lola,” said the judge. “Here is your medal. A juicy bone for you and here's a box of chocolates for your owner.”

Leah stepped up to help carry all the prizes, except for the bone which Lola had firmly between her teeth.

“Next is the cutest dog called Riley,” called the judge. She was given her prize and congratulated accordingly.

“Now for the three fastest dogs, who really gave their best performances, please come to the stand, Darkly, Satin, and Mark.”

“Well done you three. Here are your medals. Boxes of chocolates for your owners, and of course, juicy bones for yourselves.”

“This was a great day,” thought Mark, “A juicy bone and three new friends.”

Next day Leah and Eve had to go back to school, so the dogs spent the day lazing about. After yesterday they were still a bit tired. They just lived across the road from each other, so sometimes the dogs would meet up and play in either Eve’s or Leah’s garden.

The dogs were playing chases with each other when a new dog came up to the fence. It was another German shepherd dog who stood very tall and straight.

“What are you two doing?” asked the new dog.

“We are having fun chasing each other around the garden. Do you want to play with us?” answered Lola.

“I most certainly do not want to play. I have much more important things to be doing. I was only checking that you two weren’t fighting with each other. You do know that you could get into a lot of trouble if you were. I might arrest you and take you both to gaol,” barked the new dog.

Lola looked astonished. YOU - arrest us!!! Who do you think you are?” Lola barked back, feeling very annoyed.

“I am the new police dog in this area, and I am on the lookout for bad dogs that fight, or poop in the street.”

“We would never do that!” snapped Mark. Poop in the street!!! I mean we might play- fight a little, but that’s all.”

“Well, don’t say I didn’t warn you!” barked the police dog, as he strolled off down the road.

“We’ll get him - Mr high and mighty,” barked Lola. “He needs taken down a peg or two.”

“I agree. We’ll think of something that’ll put his tail between his legs.”

Mark had just stopped talking when he heard his name being called. He looked

around, and there was a well built medium sized dog standing behind him.

“Hi there,” answered Mark, “Have I met you before?”

“I don’t think so. I saw you at the show yesterday and you ran very well. I won a race like that some time ago, and I beat a big grey hound.”

“What’s your name?” asked Mark.

“It’s Rocky. I am a Jackabee, and this is Betsy my lady dog friend. I couldn’t help overhearing you talking to that police dog. I think you are quite right, he is too cheeky.”

It’s nice to meet you Rocky, I am Mark and this is my lady friend Lola. We were going for a walk - or maybe a run up the

fields. Do you two want to come with us?”

“We’d love too,” barked Betsy and Rocky together.

On their way to the fields the dogs chatted to each other. Rocky told them about the many adventures he had had when he was younger. He talked about the magic forest in Castlerock; about the time he was almost put in jail because another dog had stolen sausages from the butcher’s and had blamed him; about living in the forest with the foxes, and how they taught him how to survive.

“You’ve had many adventures Rocky, said Mark, “It must have been great fun. What do you think we should do about this new police dog?”

“Why don’t we all hide behind a hedge? When he is passing we could be planning a great bone robbery at the butcher’s shop in the high street?” suggested Rocky.

They all agreed, and arranged a time to meet behind a tall hedge in the town.

They found out what time the police dog passed this point, and just as he arrived the dogs started talking.

The police dog stopped, and put his ear close to the hedge. He heard Mark saying, “We’ll all run into the high street butcher’s shop and each of us will steal some meat. I will take the sausages, and the three of you grab steaks, chickens and the lamb chops. Then we will all run away to my house and hide the goods. I think

we'll carry out our plan tomorrow at four o'clock. When it is beginning to get dark, we'll strike."

At the other side of the hedge the police dog was busy writing down all the details in his notepad.

"The sergeant will be pleased with me when I tell him this!" he thought.



It was almost four o'clock next day and the dogs had all gathered in the high street to see what was going to happen. Two police cars, with their sirens blaring, rushed up the road towards the butcher's and came to a quick stop outside. Two

police men jumped out of each car, and ran into the shop. It was crowded with customers buying their meat for the weekend. They all ran out into the street, screaming. The butcher didn't know what was happening, and dropped his knife. He then ran into the street too. All this caused complete mayhem with the traffic. Cars started to crash into each other. All the drivers were angry. The high street shoppers were very annoyed, and the crosser of all was the butcher - who had lost all his business.

“What's going on here?” he shouted to the closest policeman.

“I don't know. You'd better talk to the sergeant.”

“Where is he?”

The sergeant was trying to hide away from the angry crowd.

“Wait until I get my hands on that silly police dog. He’ll be back at a desk before he can bark twice.”



The butcher’s shop in the high street.

The four dogs went home laughing. “We won’t be hearing from that cheeky police dog for a long time!”

Rocky and Betsy had to go home, They said goodbye to the other dogs, and

Rocky told them that if they wanted to hear more about his adventures they should read his book. (The adventures of a Jackabee.)

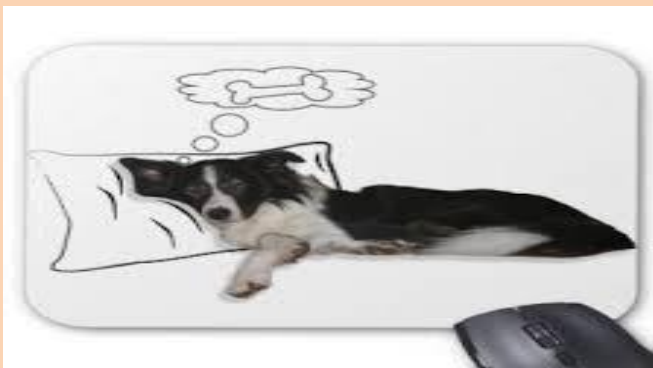
Mark and Lola promised that they would get the book and ask Eve and Leah to read it to them at bedtime.

It wasn't long before they were all asleep. Mark was dreaming of a big juicy bone. He woke and went outside; found the place in the garden where he had hidden one, and started to chew at it.

"Its great being a dog," he thought.



MARK WITH HIS BONE.



Lola was also dreaming about a bone, but was too tired to get up.

It was Saturday morning. Leah looked out of the window. It was cold, but sunny. Well, after all it was now November, and the weather was good for this time of year.

“I would love to go to a beach somewhere, just to walk or play in the sand. Maybe I could collect some odd shells.”

Leah phoned Eve and asked her about the idea.

“I’d love to,” answered Eve excitedly.

They spoke to their mums, who both agreed for the girls to spend some time at the beach that day. Their mums made up some sandwiches for them all.

It was now eleven o'clock and everyone was getting into their cars. The two dogs jumped in together into the boot of Eve's mum's car, as it was a little bigger. The drive took about one hour and they stopped at Carnfunnock Park, on the coast road. There was a long sandy beach there, and lots of things to do. The kids wanted to play crazy golf first. The dogs were not allowed in, so they sat outside the fence and watched.

"I think Leah will win," barked Lola.

"No! Eve will win," said Mark.

It was a draw in the end. They then went to play on the train, and the slides and the swings.

All was going well until Mark suddenly stood up on his hind legs, his ears pricked. He was on full alert.

“What’s wrong?” asked Lola, who had noticed straight away.

“Look out there Lola, towards the sea,” said Mark, which he could see very clearly from that point.

Lola looked carefully. I can’t notice anything wrong.”

“Don’t you see the little red fishing boat? There is a man gripping onto the side of it. I think he has fallen into the water and can’t get back into his boat. We will have to help him!”

The girls were busy playing on the swings, and were not paying attention to the two dogs.

“Come on Lola. We have no time to waste. Run as fast as you can.”

“What about Leah and Eve? We should tell them where we’re going.”

“No time for that. Let’s go.”

The two dogs ran down the hill to the beach, and dived into the water. It was cold but they were very brave. They both started to swim towards the fishing boat.

More and more people were gathering on the shore to watch what was happening.

Mark was first to reach the boat. His legs were much longer, and so he could swim faster.

When the man saw the two dogs coming he shouted,

“Help me. Please help me.” Mark had been right. He had fallen out of the small boat, and was almost drowning.

Mark grabbed him by his coat and Lola grabbed his jumper. They both pulled and pulled until they got him half way into the boat. Mark now jumped into the boat and pulled the man in. He was safe now.

The people on the beach cheered and cheered, shouting, “Brave dogs! “Brave dogs!”

The man was now able to steer the boat in towards the beach. When they landed the man hugged the two dogs and thanked them over and over again.

Mark and Lola then ran up the hill, back to the park, and watched the girls still swinging in the play ground. They didn't see anything of what had happened.

That night, when they went home, the family were watching the news on television. They saw the saga of the drowning man, rescued by two dogs, at Carnfunnock beach. The girls watched the news very closely.

“Those pair of dogs look very like Lola and Mark,” remarked Eve.

“It couldn't be. They were with us all day. Besides, I don't think our dogs would be quite brave enough to do a thing like that.”

On the way back to Ballyclare they were all very hot, with their coats on. They saw

an ice-cream van sitting by the side of the road. Eve's mum was driving and she pulled the car alongside the van.

"Four large ice-cream cones, please," she said to the man serving in the van.

"Of course. I'll get them for you right away."

They didn't know it was Mr Hawkins and Zorro his cat in the van. The ones who sold "THE MAGIC ICE-CREAM."

Zorro jumped from the van, and in through the window of the car. The dogs were startled, as they were sitting in the back seat this time, instead of in the boot. "How dare a cat jump in here with us." barked Lola.

The two dogs got an even bigger shock when Zorro spoke to them in doggy language.

Zorro told them he was a magic cat, and he could help the dogs speak in English to their masters, if they wanted too.

“OH! That would be great fun,” barked Mark. We could really fool Eve and Lola.”

“Yes, let’s do that.”

Zorro got back out of the window, and returned with some special ice-cream for the dogs.

“Now eat this quickly. You will be able to talk, but only for a day or two. Have fun,” meowed Zorro. “I’ll meet you both again, sometime, and you can tell me what happened.”

“Right you two dogs. What are you doing sitting in the back seat? Get into the boot,” said Eve.

The dogs jumped out and into the boot of the car. The family ate their ice-creams before setting off again.

On the way the girls heard a little voice saying, “You’re going the wrong way.”

“Who said that? Was it you Leah?”

“No, it wasn’t me. It must have been my mum. If not, it must have been your mum.”

“It wasn’t me either. I do know the way, and this is the right road.”

Then one of the dogs started to sing,
“How much is that doggy in the window?”

“Stop singing Leah,” said her mum.

“I’m not singing. It must be Eve.”

“It most certainly isn’t me. It must be my mum.”

“No chance. It’s not me,” answered Christine.

“Then it MUST be me!” said Leah’s mum,
“But my lips are not moving.”

At that point the family heard lots of laughing, coming from the boot of the car.

“Who’s in there with the dogs?” they wondered. Leah’s mum stopped the car and they all scrambled out to look into the boot. However there was no one there except the dogs, and everyone knew that dogs could not talk. Just then a policeman came over to the car.

“Is everything alright here?” he asked.

“All’s fine,” answered Eve. “We thought we heard someone talking in the boot of our car.”

“All I can see are two fine dogs, and they can’t talk!” said the policeman.

He started to walk back to his car, when he heard someone say,

“What a silly policeman. Dogs can talk.”

“Who said that?” he demanded.

“I did,” said Lola, but no one noticed it was her.

“I will have to arrest all of you, if you don’t tell me who’s doing this talking.”

“I am,” said Lola again. Still nobody saw her.

“Right, you are all going to jail.”

“Dear, dear. We had better own up. We don’t want the family going to jail, just because we were having fun.”

Lola agreed. The two dogs jumped out of the boot of the car, and walked up to the police man.

“It was us talking. We were playing a game,” said the dogs in the most polite English.

The police man looked at them in amazement. He was speechless and stumbled back to his car. He drove off at full speed.

“Dog s that can talk, and play games! I think I need to see a doctor.” he thought.

The family were very cross, but soon forgave the dogs once they saw the funny

side of things. The dogs explained how Zorro gave them the magic ice-cream, and they thought they would like to play a joke on the family. Just then the ice-cream magic wore off, and the dogs could only bark again.

At this time of year (coming up to Christmas,) the steam trains at Whitehead started running excursions to different parts of the country. From the first of December they always had a Santa on board, who would give a small gift to each child, and a little drink of rum to the adults!

The mums heard it was going to be going to Castlerock next day, so they booked four seats. They asked the conductor if they could bring two very well behaved dogs with them.

“Of course you can. But no running around the carriages please. They must stay at your feet.”

Next day came quickly. The mums had everything packed and ready for nine o'clock. The train was leaving at ten from Belfast's central station. When they arrived at the station, the girls and the dogs were delighted to see it was an old steam train that was going to pull them along.

At exactly ten o'clock the big engine gave a few long puffs. The station master blew his whistle. The engine then puffed again, and let off lots of steam. Then it started to chug, chug, out of the station, very slowly. As it got out of the town and into the countryside it began to get faster.

The journey was great fun. Between the puff, puff, puff, of the engine, and the rattling of the carriages, the girls loved it. As for the dogs, the rocking and rolling of the old fashioned train was just too much for them, and they both fell fast asleep.

A long whistle sound woke them instantly. They both jumped up from under the seat. Just as they tried to look out of the window, the train shuddered to a halt.

“Castlerock town and beach,” announced the conductor. Everyone have lots of fun. Please be back on the train for six o’clock. We cannot wait for late comers, as we have a very tight schedule to keep to.”

After the announcement all the passengers left the train. Some went to the beach, and others went into the small

town to buy some souvenirs. The families and the dogs headed straight for the beach, where they had lots of fun.

Eve would kick a ball and the dogs would run after it. They would bring it back again for Leah to throw it this time.

The mums were preparing the picnic and when it was ready they called the girls. They didn't need to call the dogs! As soon as they smelt the food, (especially the burgers and sausages cooking on the barbeque) they were both there right away.

After a great barbeque, the girls wanted to go swimming.

“Definitely not!” It's far too cold this time of year, and besides, it is time to catch the train at six o'clock.”

The girls agreed. They helped their mums clear up before heading back to the train.

No one noticed that Lola and Mark had wandered off, to look at some rocks on the far side of the beach. They didn't know the time - or that the tide was coming in fast. They would soon be cut off from the main beach if they kept on walking. The dogs spotted a coloured ball in the distance, and thought it would be a good idea to catch it and bring it back to the girls. The two ran very fast, but the ball seemed to be getting further and further away. Then they realised that the wind was getting stronger, and was pushing the ball along on the top of the waves.

“Forget it,” barked Mark. “We’ll never catch up with it.”

“That’s true. We had better get back to the girls, or they will be worrying about us.”

Indeed they were worrying, and so were Christine and Mrs Johnson.

“Where can our dogs be?” wondered Leah.

Christine looked at her watch, it was almost six.

“We will have to leave them here. The train is ready to go and we daren’t miss it. We don’t have anywhere that we can stay here tonight. We’ll come back tomorrow and search for these silly dogs. They will

be safe enough. They will hide out in a cave or something. Besides, they have both got good warm coats to keep them from feeling cold.”

Eve and Leah were really sad that they had to leave their dogs behind, but they knew that their mums were right. The dogs could take care of themselves.

Mark and Lola looked behind them. What a shock they got. The sea had come in and they were totally cut off. They thought about swimming, but they had no idea which way to go.

“What are we going to do?” barked Lola, feeling a little bit frightened.

Mark tried to act a little braver; after all he was a big Alsatian now.

“We will have to climb those rocks, because I can feel the water rising to cover my paws. We will have to get to higher ground.”

As they scrambled up the grassy bank they heard a bark which they both recognised. Then more barks followed, saying in doggy language, “What are you do doing here, in Castlerock?”

They looked around and saw that it was Rocky. The dogs told him about what had happened, and then they asked Rocky what he was doing here too.

“I come here every year, about this time, to meet my old friend Norman the Gnome. The Gnomes always have a big party for all the animals in the forest just before Christmas. It starts at 12 midnight

and goes on until first light, because that's when the humans start walking in the forest.

"We would love to come too," both dogs barked at once.

"Then follow me. We'll go to the forest and wait there. I will introduce you to some new friends."



IT WAS A LOVELY WALK INTO THE FOREST

Rocky showed them the talking trees





They chatted with the trees, who told the dogs lots of stories about the forest. Suddenly there appeared lots of Gnomes coming out from the bushes. The Gnomes started to sing and dance around a big log fire, which one of them had lit.

The king of the Gnomes walked up to Rocky, and the dogs, saying,

“Good to see you again Rocky. Please introduce me to your friends.”

“Hello again Norman,” answered Rocky.

“This is Mark and Lola. They have been cut off by the tide, and will have to stay in the forest tonight. I thought I would bring them along for the party, if that’s alright?”

“Good idea. They are welcome to join in the fun.”



The Gnomes gathered for the party.



Norman, the king Gnome watched the party

The party went on until morning. They danced and sang all the Gnome songs they knew. They drank dew juice from the plants and the flowers. This made everyone feel sleepy. By six o'clock the gnomes started going back to their

homes, in the bushes. Soon all was quiet again. Rocky said goodbye, and showed Lola and Mark the way home.

At home Eve and Leah were getting ready to catch the first train to Castlerock. They wanted to find their dogs as soon as possible, because they missed them so much.

Christine drove them all to the railway station and paid for the fares. The families sat quietly during the journey, wondering about their friends, Mark and Lola.

“Will we ever see them again?”
whispered Leah.

“Of course we will. We’ll find them.”
answered Mrs Johnson.

They got off the train at Castlerock, and who do you think was standing on the platform? Yes it was Mark and Lola.

Their owners were so pleased to see the dogs that they forgot to be angry with them.

“Where did you pair go? We looked everywhere for you both.” said Eve.

“We got cut off by the tide. It came in very quickly, and we couldn’t get back to the beach,” barked Mark, but it just sounded like a long bark, bark, bark, to the girls.

“Oh I wish I had some of that magic ice-cream, so that I could tell them what happened in English.”

The two dogs wanted to tell everyone about the Gnome party, and all the fun they had enjoyed all night, but again all they could say was bark, bark, bark.

The whole family were very happy again, and caught the next train home. This time the journey was cheerful now that they were all together again.

“It won’t be long until Christmas now,” announced Christine. “I hope Santa brings you all lots of toys, and juicy bones for the dogs.”

That’s true,” agreed Mrs Johnson. “Only another two weeks before we put up the decorations all around the house.”

The dogs thought this was very exciting. “I hope we get to put up some in the garden,” barked Mark.

It was now Christmas day, and everyone had received lots of presents from Santa. The dogs stayed up all night to see if they could catch a glimpse of the reindeers, but it all happened so quickly that they missed the magic.

There were lots of turkey, and delicious puddings on the table for the feast. Santa had brought two of the juiciest bones for the dogs, which kept them busy for most of the day. Between chewing bones, and sleeping beside a big log fire, Mark and Lola felt very content. Leah and Eve opened their presents. Eve was given a new mobile phone, while Leah got some new games for her computer. But the best gift of all was the gift of being one of the FOUR GREAT FRIENDS.

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