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Dudley



Chapter 1

New Friends

The most beautiful hazel eyes I had ever seen were staring at me! A little girl was standing in the mall looking at me through the toy store window. She looked so sad and worried. As I watched her, I knew I wanted to be her friend.

Her name was Kay. She was with her brother Alan and their Aunt Jenny and Uncle Bob. I overheard them talking about her eighth birthday, which was two weeks away.

“Oh Aunt Jenny, can I have the big, furry gorilla for my birthday present?” asked Kay. “He looks so warm and cuddly. He’s perfect! Please, please.”

Before I knew what happened, I was scooped out of the store window by Aunt

Jenny. She placed me in Kay's loving arms. Aunt Jenny paid for me and Uncle Bob said that it was time to go to the airport.

I didn't want to leave my friends in the toy store, especially Suzy Kangaroo. We always had so much fun together. But, something told me that I needed to go with Kay and her 10-year-old brother.

Tears streamed down my face as I waved goodbye to Suzy. She waved too and gave me a "thumbs-up."

I didn't know it then, but I had just started **THE MOST IMPORTANT JOURNEY OF MY LIFE!**



Optional Question

1. What do you think Dudley meant when he said he had just started **THE MOST IMPORTANT JOURNEY OF HIS LIFE?**

Chapter 2

Flying Away

After we bought Alan's favorite pizza to take with us, we dashed to the airport. Kay and Alan gave their aunt and uncle a big hug and thanked them for a wonderful week. We three "kids" boarded the airplane. This was my first time flying in a jet!

We were on our way to Sanibel Island, Florida. Alan and Kay had moved to the beach with their mother a couple of years ago after their parents' divorce. They wanted to be close to their grandmother, Mimi.

I was snuggled in Kay's arms when Alan started to tease her about me.

"Hey, what's your silly gorilla's name?" asked Alan.

"He's not silly," Kay replied. "He's very special and his name is Dudley."

“Dudley? That’s a goofy name,” teased Alan.

Kay’s feelings were hurt and she started to cry. “It’s not a goofy name. It fits him. And anyway, he’s my friend! Why don’t you read your book and leave me alone?” she said.

“OK, OK,” Alan said.

After a few minutes he started to talk to Kay very softly.

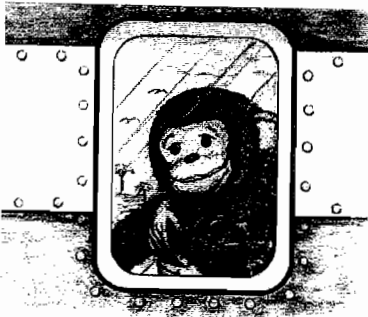
“I’m going to miss Aunt Jenny and Uncle Bob. I wish we had told them about Mom’s drinking. They’ve never seen how she acts when she’s drunk. Maybe they could have helped,” he said.

“Yeah,” said Kay unhappily. “I hate keeping this secret. I don’t want to have my friends over. I never know what she’ll be doing.” She paused and then continued, “Oh, my tummy is starting to hurt again.”

After awhile Alan started to read his book again and Kay fell asleep, using me as a pillow.

As we flew over the island, the beautiful, blue ocean and white sand looked quiet and peaceful. I had heard about all of the unusual shells on the island. I thought about how cool it would be to play on the beach and collect them. It looked like an awesome place to live.

Soon Alan poked Kay and said, "Wake up, we're landing. I hope Mom's



here to meet us."

"Me too. She's always late for everything," answered Kay.

Mother waited at the gate for them. They ran to her and we all had a big group hug and lots of kisses.

"Yuck, she smells like she's been drinking," I said to myself. I knew Alan and Kay noticed too, because they gave each other a worried look.



“Oh my! Who is this?” asked Mother as she pointed to me.

Kay answered, “This is Dudley. He’s an early birthday present from Aunt Jenny and Uncle Bob.”

“How ya doing Mom? Did you miss us? What did you do while we were gone?” asked Alan.

Mother said, “I caught up with a lot of school stuff during spring break like lesson plans and grading papers. But, I missed you both so much. I’m really glad you’re home.”

After we got our luggage, we started for my new home. We had to drive over a two-lane causeway to the island.

At times, Mother weaved across the center line. Kay hugged me so I wouldn’t fall off her lap and Alan clutched the pizza.

I could tell they were both scared. Alan teased Kay to try to get her mind off their mother's driving.

"Give me that silly looking gorilla. I'll use him for a punching bag," he said.

"Stop it! Stop it! He's my special friend!" yelled Kay.

Mother screamed, "You're both making me nervous! Five minutes of quiet time! If I hear one more sound, you'll both be grounded from TV for a week!"

Alan and Kay didn't say another word.

Optional Questions

1. Why do you think Kay and Alan didn't tell their aunt and uncle about their mother's drinking problem?
2. Have you ever been in a car with someone who had been drinking? If so, how did you feel?