



Frisky's Adventure

It was a cold, wintry day in Sheldon. All week long, gales had brought a deep chill to the air. The Christmas season's fun and the winter snows had given way to wetter and windier days, leaving the children of Sheldon impatient for spring's arrival.

Up in Kento's bedroom, he and Earl worked on a fleet of paper airplane models that Kento had downloaded. In spite of their absorbing project, Kento sighed. Little had happened in the week since the Squad had last met in the Lodge.

"I've finished another one!" Earl announced, triumphantly holding up the glued aircraft.

"And the glue is nearly dry on this one, too," said Kento. "How many have we finished now?"

"Twelve."

"Earl!" Kento's mother called from down the stairs. "Your father just called. He's coming by in five minutes to pick you up for dinner. And, Kento, we're eating in ten minutes, so you might want to start cleaning up."

"Looks as though that's all I'll be doing for today," said Earl.

"Thank you for dropping by," said Kento. "See you at school tomorrow,"

Earl carefully packed four of the finished planes in a shoebox and put it in his backpack. "See you tomorrow," he said.

By the time Earl got downstairs,

he could see his father's car parked out in front of the house. It was raining, and Earl held his backpack over his head to shield himself. He jumped into the backseat, and as his father pulled out into the street, Earl overheard the newscaster on the car radio.

"Winds are not expected to die down anytime soon, and they may bring snow, with temperatures expected to drop below freezing tonight. Watch for ice patches on the roads and drive carefully. ..."

The drive back to his house took only a few minutes, and if it hadn't been for the rain and wind, Earl could have easily walked or run the distance, but now he was grateful for the warm car, especially as it started hailing just as they pulled onto Claremont Street where their house was.

As they drove up the driveway, Earl could hear Frisky barking excitedly inside. Seconds later, the door opened, and Frisky came bounding out toward him. He wasn't about to start petting Frisky in the hail, so he merely gave the dog a pat and dashed into the house. His father ran in and closed the door.

"Wait," said Earl. "Frisky is still out there!"

"Sorry, I didn't see him."

Earl opened the door and looked through the pounding hail, Frisky was nowhere to be seen.

"Where did he go? He was just out there!"

"Don't worry, Earl. Frisky will be fine. Maybe he just wanted to get some fresh air. He'll be back."



Earl looked glum. It didn't feel right for Frisky to be out there alone, especially with the hail coming down so heavily. But his father was right—Frisky liked to eat as much as Earl did, and if nothing else, hunger would bring the dog back.

Gaining some comfort from that thought, Earl joined his family at the dinner table, and a few hours later, he was in bed, praying that Frisky would be safe and that he would make his way home before the morning.

* * *

Frisky stood by the side of the road, huffing and puffing. It had been a long

scamper from his home on Claremont Street to the farthest edge of Pine Ridge Forest. Now he peered into the looming dark maze of pines, bushes, and outcroppings of rock.

Frisky had come to Pine Ridge Forest a few times with his old master, Colin, and then with the Five Squad on their unexpected kidnap rescue mission last spring. Nevertheless, this part of the forest was unfamiliar, and the untamed surroundings made finding his way around no easier. The hail had now stopped, and thick flakes of snow were beginning to fall, but the snow covered scents; and there was also the darkness, which made it even more difficult to recognize familiar landmarks.

Yet there was a reason he had come here. Something had woken him from his early-evening doze and had caused him to run without stopping until he came to this place. Now he stood still and listened, trying to fathom what he was doing so far away from his warm home and waiting dinner.

Frisky suddenly cocked his ears. He had heard a very close and familiar whisper.

He barked. Not that he was afraid; he only wanted to give a signal to whoever might be nearby. Even with his finely honed canine senses, he was unable to detect anyone.

"Psst! Frisky!"

This time, Frisky recognized the voice, and saw the form of the person to which it belonged. It was the voice of his beloved former master, Colin.

Frisky bounded over, joyfully barking and wagging his tail.

"Hey, boy, how are you doing?" Colin asked, bending down so that he was face to face with his faithful companion of times past. The man looked a good twenty years younger than he had in his final days of life.

Frisky let out another joyous bark. To him there was nothing strange about this meeting, even though Colin had passed away more than a year earlier.

"It's good to see you too. I've missed you," Colin said. "But we don't have a lot of time. This snow is going to be whipped into a blizzard soon. Come, follow me."

With that, Colin took off running through the trees; straight through low limbs and intertwining branches as if they weren't there, and Frisky sped after him through the underbrush, never stopping to wonder what his master might be doing here, where they were going, or what for.

* * *



"What's up?" Kento asked the next morning as Earl entered the schoolyard.

"It's Frisky. He ran out last night and hasn't come back since."

"That's strange. Has he ever done that before?"

"No."

"Well, at least it's stopped snowing. I'm sure he'll be okay. Frisky's a clever dog, he can take care of himself. Do you want to come over after school and finish those airplanes?"

Just then Susan walked up. "Hello! How's everything? Listen, what would you think about meeting at the Lodge this afternoon after school? It isn't raining or snowing anymore, and I heard Chris has a new game we can play."

Earl shrugged sullenly.

"What's the matter?" Susan asked him, and Kento explained Frisky's disappearance. The school bell interrupted their conversation, and they agreed to meet at the Lodge.



"Maybe we can think of something to do about finding him," said Susan, "if he isn't back by then."

Earl gave her a hopeful smile, and the three went to their classrooms.

* * *

Frisky stirred lazily as the morning sun's first glimmers warmed his face. Opening his eyes, it took him a moment to recollect where he was and how he had gotten here, tucked under a rock. In front of him was nothing but trees and undergrowth covered with a thick fresh layer of snow from the night's blizzard.

A squirrel darted out from behind some trees and scampered into a snow-covered clearing. It stopped and stared at Frisky, then disappeared up a tree.

A bird chirped overhead, and Frisky felt something stir beside him.

He rolled over to see who he had spent the night beside—a chubby little boy, about two years old, with curly blond hair tangled with twigs and dirt. Frisky had no idea who he was, where he had come from, or what he was doing alone in the



middle of the forest. He only knew that Colin had led him to the boy and that he was meant to stay with him.

The boy stirred and turned; sticks and leaves stuck to his knitted sweater as they did to his hair.

"Momma," he whimpered.

Frisky stood up and shook himself, then he lay back down next to the little boy to keep him warm.

"Psst! Frisky!"

It was Colin again. "Hello, boy," he whispered. "How's everything?"

Frisky responded with an excited bark.

"My dear Frisky, still ever faithful and obedient! I knew I could count on you. Thank you for watching over little Alessandro and keeping him warm last night. He should be fine now, but we have something else to do. Come."

Frisky jumped up and looked back with concern at the boy.

“He’ll be fine,” said Colin. “Jesus is watching him, and the sun is rising and will keep him warm. He needed you there during the night to keep him warm. We’ll be coming back for him. Let’s go.”

Then, just as he had the night before, Colin dashed into the forest without having to brush a branch from his face. Frisky hesitated, and then took off after his master.

A few minutes later, Frisky came to a paved road leading through the forest. Off to its side down an embankment sat a car. It had careered off the road and smashed into an oak tree.

The door to the driver’s seat had swung open, its window shattered, and Frisky could see the driver unconscious in his seat, his blood-spattered head slumped to one side. The man showed no other obvious signs of injury.

Frisky looked around for Colin, but he was nowhere to be seen. Still, he knew that this was where Colin had led him and that he was meant to help the driver in some way.

He padded around the car and seeing the back passenger door was open on the other side, Frisky noticed a child’s seat in the back and several toys scattered around. Frisky sniffed and his keen nose recognized that little Alessandro had come from there.

Frisky barked, hoping to awaken the man, but he remained motionless. He then tried to jump up on him and perhaps get his attention by pawing him, but there was still no response—the man remained unconscious. However, as a result of Frisky’s activity, something fell out of the man’s jacket pocket. It was a mobile phone.

While Frisky was unaware of what it was, he did know that humans used them to speak into and hold conversations with. He stared

at it for a few moments and resumed nudging the unconscious man. Then he heard a buzz and saw the cell phone vibrating on the floor between the seats where it had fallen.

“Push the flashing button, Frisky,” he heard Colin say, though he could not see him.

Frisky looked at the vibrating piece of plastic with some hesitation. Nevertheless, he rested a paw on the phone, hopefully over the flashing button.

“Hello? Hello?”

Frisky’s ears pricked up at a woman’s tinny voice speaking through the tiny speaker, and

with his paw, tried to scoot the cell phone closer to the man.

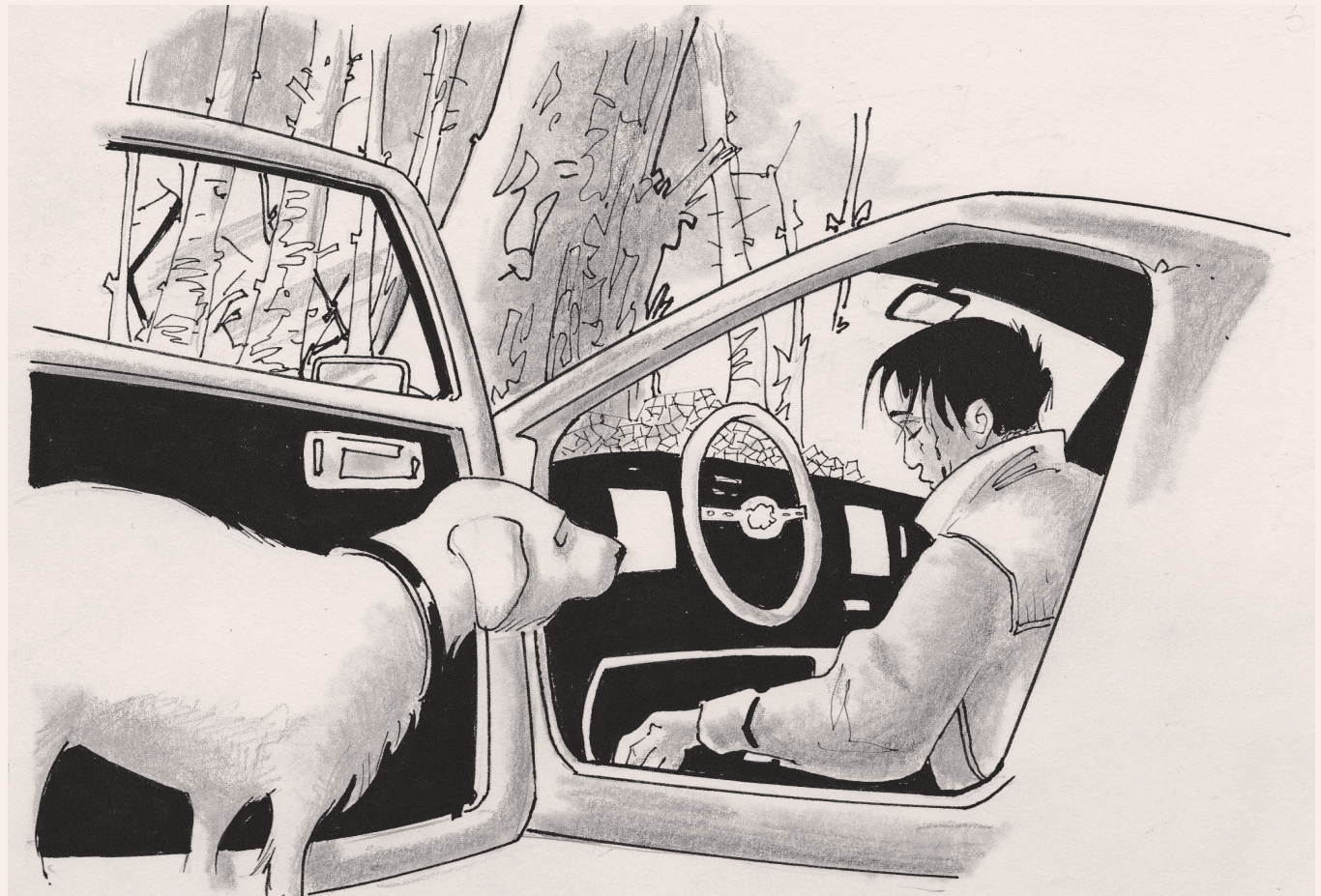
“Marco? Is that you? Hello? Where in the world are you, Marco? Hello?”

“Woof! Woof!” Frisky barked back.

The woman’s voice went quiet, then Frisky heard a thud through the speaker. She had put her phone down.

“Wait!” Frisky could hear another distant voice saying. “Did someone answer?”

“I don’t know ... it stopped ringing, then I heard a dog barking.”



"So the signal is getting through?"

"I suppose," the woman answered.

After some crackles and thuds in the speaker, a man's voice sounded.

"Hello! Is anybody there? Is anybody hearing this? Please answer."

"Woof! Woof!" Frisky barked back.

"Did your husband happen to be traveling with a dog?" Frisky heard the man ask.

"No ... we don't have a dog."

"Well, *somebody* does, and that somebody has your husband's cell phone. Now that it's been picked up, the phone company should be able to triangulate the signal for us. Harry, get ahold of CellCom and tell them we have a signal! Hold tight, Mrs. Bentoni, we should soon have a location."

What followed sounded like the woman sobbing.

* * *

That afternoon when the Squad gathered in the Lodge, Frisky's disappearance was the first topic of their conversation.

"That's funny," Karen said once Earl had recounted all that he knew. "I had a dream about Frisky last night. I rarely remember my dreams, but this one was so vivid, and so ... *friendly*. Colin was in it too. He looked much younger than he did when I visited him with you, but I knew it was him from the way he and Frisky were playing together in this garden. It was such a nice dream, and I woke up feeling all warm."

"Oh no!" said Earl. "What if your dream means that Frisky has died and is now in heaven with Colin?"

"N-no. That's not the feeling I got from the dream at all. I believe that, wherever Frisky

went, he's fine, and that maybe Colin is looking after him."

"Do you think he'll come back?" Earl asked.

"I'm sure he will," said Christopher.

"Maybe he just needed some time to get out and run. With that rain, he's probably been in the house almost all week, hasn't he?"

"He has, now that you mention it."

"See, he's probably just stretching his legs for a bit," said Kento. "A very big bit!"

Earl smiled. "I just hope he found a warm place to spend the night," he said. "It was freezing last night. This morning the little pond in our garden was completely frozen over."

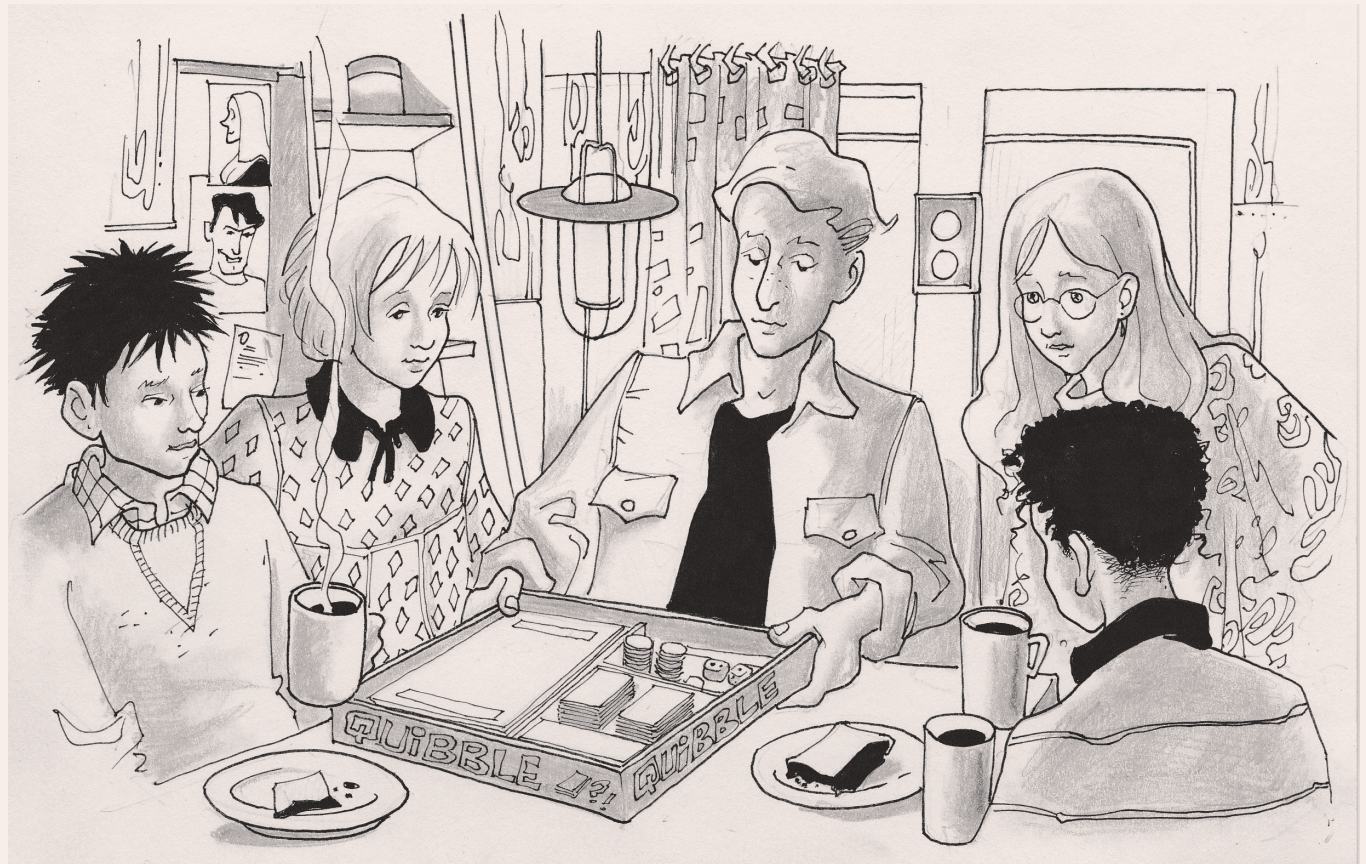
"But the goldfish were still swimming underneath, weren't they?" said Kento. "I'm sure Frisky survived as well, wherever he is."

"I suppose you're right," said Earl.

The atmosphere being a little gloomy, Christopher suggested they play his new game. Susan suggested they pray for Frisky first, and so they did, asking Jesus to watch over Frisky and help him to return home by dinnertime.

"Or else, Lord, please give us some sign of where he is and that he's all right," Karen added, and the others agreed.

"So what's the game?" Kento asked.



"It's a board game my mother picked up during an after-Christmas sale," said Christopher, and while Susan, Karen, Kento, and Earl examined the contents of the box, he explained the rules,

Midway through the game, Christopher's mother brought a snack and hot chocolate. By the time they had finished their snack and the game—which Kento had won—it was dark outside. Kento, Karen, and Earl decided to start out for their homes.

"See you all tomorrow," Christopher said, and he and Susan began packing up the game.

"Do you think Earl will be all right?" Susan asked, once the three had left. "What if Frisky's still not back when Earl gets home?"

Christopher shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe we can design and photocopy some 'missing dog' pamphlets and post them around town."

* * *

Sitting in his bedroom, Earl stared disconsolately at the floor. The four finished paper airplanes had the place of honor on top of his bookshelf, but he didn't feel like playing with them. It was past dinnertime and there was still no sign of Frisky, and he was beginning to think that something serious *had* happened; perhaps he would never see Frisky again.

"Telephone for you, Earl!" his mother called.

News of Frisky? Earl wondered as he bolted down the stairs.

"It's Karen," his mother whispered, handing him the cell phone.

"Yes? Earl here."

"Earl! Are you watching this?"

"Watching what?"

"The news—Channel Two. Quick! I think it's Frisky...!"

Earl hung up, dashed into the living room, and grabbed the TV remote.

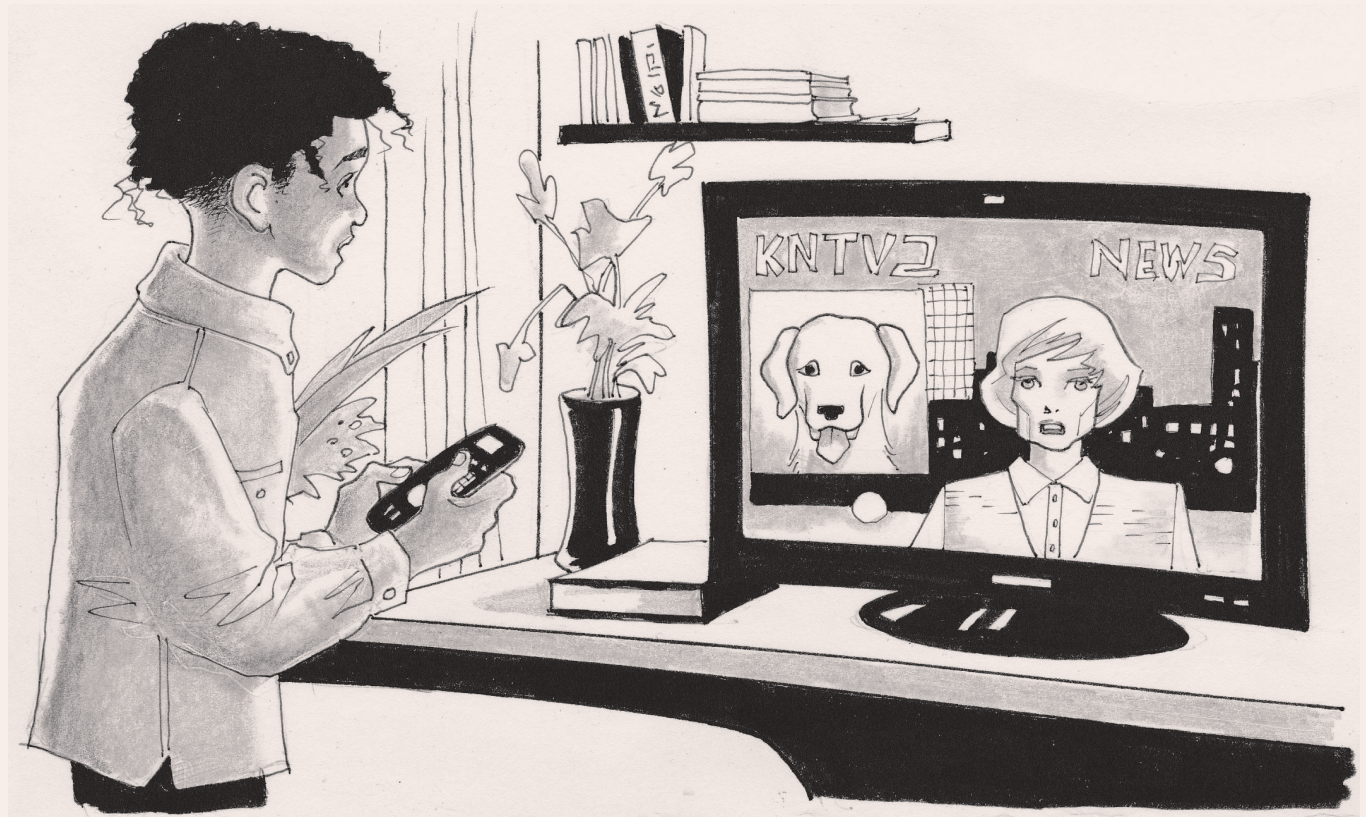
"...joyful reunion at the Bentoni house. In what Isabella Bentoni describes as a miracle, her two-year-old son was found unharmed after spending a night in the freezing wilderness of Pine Ridge Forest."

"What are you watching?" Earl's mother asked, walking in from the kitchen.

"I think it has something to do with Frisky!"

The woman newscaster continued. *"Marco Bentoni was driving back home with his two-year-old son, Alessandro, when his car hit a patch of ice and slid off the deserted road, crashing into a tree. Marco Bentoni was knocked unconscious. Little Alessandro, who was secured in a child-safety seat in the back of the car, was unhurt, but managed to undo the buckles and crawl from the car."*

"While Mrs. Bentoni called in missing person reports, the blizzard-like conditions made a search-and-rescue mission impossible, and little Alessandro would spend the next ten hours alone in the freezing Pine Ridge wilderness before being discovered by police the next morning."



"And here is where the tale gets remarkable. Mrs. Bentoni, will you tell us what happened?"

"I had tried phoning Marco several times but was unable to get through. I kept hoping for the best, though I feared the worst. Finally, one of my calls was answered, but all I heard was a dog barking into the phone."

"A dog? So, then what happened?"

"Well, the police were able to use the signal from the phone to pinpoint its location, which led us to the scene of the crash. We found Marco still unconscious, but alive. He had suffered a concussion, as well as a few broken ribs and a fractured leg, but the doctors say he is in good condition and should recover soon. There was no sign of little Alessandro, however. His seat was empty, and the blizzard had obliterated any footprints. All we saw around the car were a dog's paw prints.

"I feared perhaps they were those of a wolf at first, but one of the policemen owned a golden retriever and said these reminded him of his own dog's prints. And then we saw him."

The camera now focused on a dog lying contentedly at Mrs. Bentoni's feet and a little boy stroking him.

"Frisky!" Earl shouted.

"You're right!" his mother exclaimed.

Mrs. Bentoni continued speaking: "He was standing a few feet away from the car, barking to get our attention. It was like something out of a Lassie movie. I just knew this dog would lead us to my little boy. So while the police called a paramedic unit to take care of Marco, two of us followed this dog, and wouldn't you know it—he led us right to little Alessandro! I have no idea

how Alessandro got himself out of that child restraint seat; that in itself is amazing."

"And you have no idea where this dog came from?" the newscaster asked.

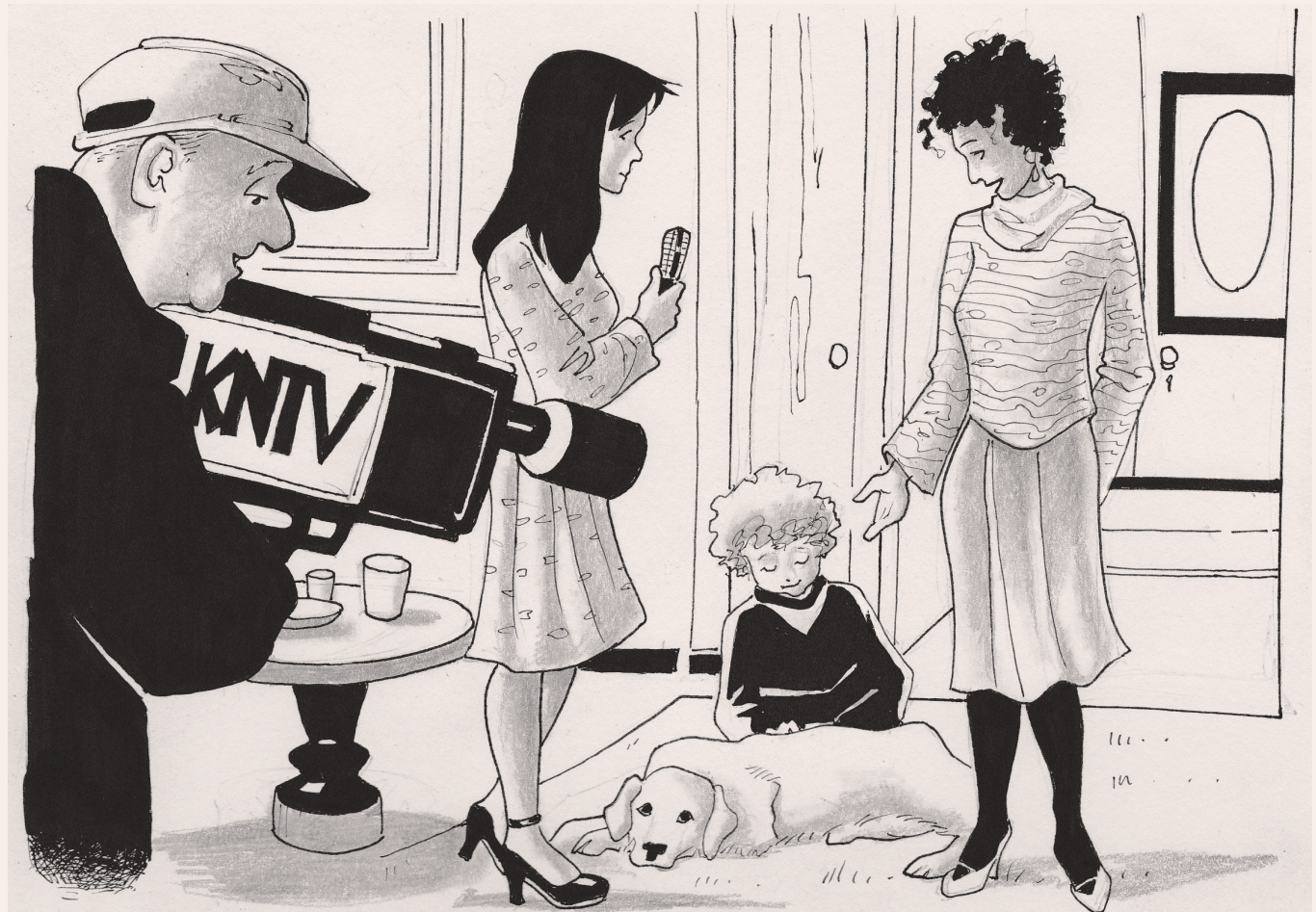
"No idea. When we checked his tag, we discovered that his owner lived in Sheldon but had passed away more than a year ago..."

As Earl continued watching, his mother picked up the cell phone.

"Hello. KNTV News? Yes, this is Candice Lomack. I'm phoning about your Bentoni report. That dog belongs to my son. ..."

* * *

As the car pulled up to the Bentoni house, Earl could already hear Frisky barking from inside, and no sooner had he and his father stepped out of the car than the front door opened and Frisky bounded out. While Earl showered Frisky with pats of affection and Frisky wagged his tail, his father approached a kind-looking woman who was standing on the doorstep with a small child hiding behind her skirt.



"Mrs. Bentoni?"

The woman nodded and smiled.

"My name is Oscar Lomack—Earl's father."

"Call me Isabella, and please, come in."

"Thank you. And thank you for seeing us on such short notice. I must confess, I was hardly able to get my son to bed last night after he saw Frisky on the news."

"It is I who should be thanking you, Mr. Lomack. If it wasn't for your dog, we wouldn't have found Marco, and my child might have frozen out there last night. I ... I just don't know what to say."

Tears came to the woman's eyes. "If ... if there's ever anything we can do for you."

"That's very kind, but I had very little to do with it. We're just glad to find Frisky safe, and even more so to know that he was a help in this very special way."

Isabella looked a little surprised and wiped her eyes. "You ... you say your dog is named Frisky?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Did you happen to be missing two dogs?"

"No. Just Frisky. He ran off the night before last, and we had no idea why or where he had gone until we saw the newscast about your husband's accident."

"That's funny. Ever since Alessandro has been home, whenever he speaks of that night, he's been saying 'Fisky and Colin.' How could he have known the dogs' names?"

"Umm, I don't know what you think about such things, Mrs. Bentoni, but Colin is... was..."

"Oh dear, Mr. Lomack ... I haven't even offered you anything. Coffee?"

Oscar smiled. "I never say no to coffee."

Meanwhile, little Alessandro had run out to join Earl.

"Me play with Fisky," he said, and Earl explained to him that the dog was called 'Frisky.'

"Fisky," Alessandro replied, stroking the dog's nose. "Fisky and Colin help Alessandro."

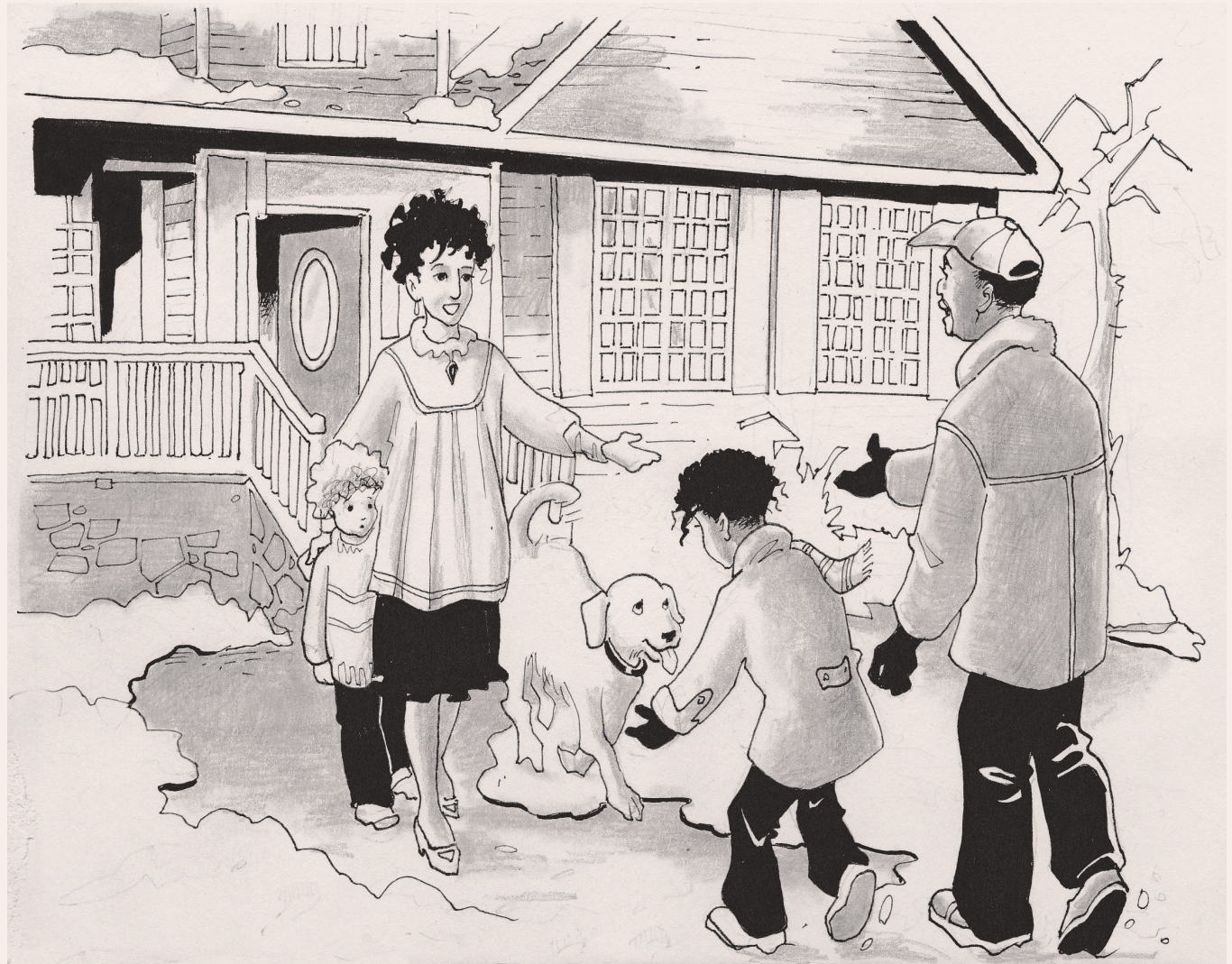
"Colin? Did ... did you see Colin?" Earl asked, and Alessandro toddled off after a

red ball that Frisky had dug out of a pile of snow.

"How's Frisky doing, son?" Oscar asked.

"Good ... er, Dad ... Alessandro has been talking about Colin. I think he may have seen him."

"Colin?" Isabella asked. "Colin is not a dog?"



“No. He was an old man who lived a few houses down from one of Earl’s friends.”

“He had an amazing Japanese type of garden with a huge sequoia tree,” said Earl.

“Oh ... you mean Mr. Hedgcomb, the old recluse who passed away last year?”

“Yes. He always wanted us children to call him Colin.”

“You mean to say our little Alessandro saw a *dead* man?” Isabella asked.

“I don’t know what you think of such phenomena, Mrs. Bentoni,” Oscar replied. “But I believe ‘saint’ might be the word you’re looking for. Mr. Hedgcomb was an old saint of a man—a missionary in his younger years and was a good friend of the children. He was Frisky’s former master, which probably accounts for the dog’s gentle and caring manner, especially when around young children. I have no doubt that God has some special purpose in sparing your husband and child in this miraculous way.”

* * *

A few weeks later, a letter arrived in the Lomack mailbox, which Oscar read to his family as they sat around the dinner table.

Dear Mr. Lomack and family,

I want to thank you once again for your part in helping my family and me. It wasn’t just your dog coming to rescue my son and husband. It was also you telling me about God and His greater purpose in allowing these things to happen and come together.

I must tell you that I have often thought about doing more for God. You see, my sister is a missionary in Africa. Then, when I heard that Colin Hedgcomb, Frisky’s former master, had also been a missionary, I knew that God was trying to tell me something.

So now I have written to my sister and asked her if there is anything I can do to help. I will be visiting her soon to talk about things we haven’t talked about for years.

*With boundless gratitude,
Isabella Bentoni*

P.S.: Marco was released from the hospital a week ago. His leg is healing well, and while his ribs are still sore from time to time, and he has to move around on crutches for the moment, he is happy to be alive. He has seen, as I have, how fragile life can be. His time in the hospital has filled him with compassion for others less fortunate than us, and he shares my desire to find a way to help those who need it, as God—and you, and Frisky, and Colin—have helped us.