

# CHAPTER ONE

**R**udy's skateboard was teetering on the edge of the highest half-pipe in the Skateway. His nerves rattled as he stared down the sheer ramp, which was sloping away like a huge concrete wave.



His two best friends, Femi and Edie, were watching nearby. Femi was wide-eyed and waiting to be amazed. Edie's ghostly aura was glowing with anticipation. But if Rudy chickened out, they wouldn't think any less of him.

They all loved practising tricks and always hung out at the Skateway after school. But none of them had ever done *The Daring Double*.

At least, not yet!



‘Are you sure about this, Rudy?’ Edie called out, as Femi resisted the urge to hide behind his bandages—he couldn’t miss this!

The afternoon sun glinted in Rudy’s eyes as he gave his friends a reassuring wink. He kicked off. His skateboard hit the ramp. The autumn breeze flicked his spiky fringe, pushing back his little wolf ears.



Rudy's wheels spun in a blur, down the ramp and up the other side, then:

# WHOOOSH!

He shot into the air.

Rudy's friends watched, willing him to make it. He grabbed his skateboard and the world spun around him as he flipped in a daring, double somersault.





Femi's and Edie's jaws dropped.

But Rudy landed safely back on his wheels and scraped to a stop at the bottom of the concrete pipe with a pop-slam!



‘That was awesome!’ Femi cried, almost bursting out of his bandages.

‘And ever so slightly . . . *stupid!*’ Edie said. ‘You are mortal, remember?’

Rudy smiled, flashing his pointy canines. He couldn’t believe he’d done it!

‘Let me try,’ Femi said and ran to the top of the half-pipe.

‘Be careful, yeah?’ Rudy called out, fearing for his friend.

Femi looked good as he kicked off, but halfway down, a loose bandage caught in his wheels.

Edie and Rudy gasped.

The faster Femi skated, the more his bandages unravelled and tangled until . . .

# WHUMP!



Femi's board flipped over and he crash-landed on the ramp, with a ball of bandages round his ankles.

Rudy and Edie ran to their friend. 'Are you OK?' Rudy asked.



Femi groaned and gave them a thumbs-up. Edie clapped her hands, delighted and relieved. ‘That was spectacular, Femi. Just not in a good way!’

As she and Rudy began untangling their friend, Rudy froze.



The sound made Rudy’s wolf hackles rise. As his mind focused, he dropped everything and shot off across the park, leaving the others staring, open-mouthed.

A moment later, they ran after him.

‘What is it?’ Femi asked when he and Edie found Rudy crawling around behind the bins.

The answer came as a huge surprise when Rudy emerged holding a little, furry wolf cub.

‘*Ahh*, he’s adorable,’ Femi cooed, as the cub playfully clawed at his loose bandages.



‘*Err*, understatement of the year,’ Edie said.

‘Didn’t you hear him whimpering?’ Rudy asked.

Femi shook his head. ‘We don’t have your *insane wolf-hearing!*’

‘Or your nose for sniffing out pizza places!’ Edie added.

The little cub licked Rudy’s nose:

**SLURP!**

‘Where’s your pack, little fella?’ Rudy asked, stroking the cub’s ears.

‘Looks like he thinks *you’re* his pack,’ Femi said as the cub nestled into Rudy’s arms.

‘Hey.’ Edie looked concerned. ‘You can’t just keep a random wolf cub!’ She put her hand on her hip. ‘His pack are bound to be looking for him.’

Rudy strained his ears and listened. ‘It doesn’t sound like it.’

Edie let out an uneasy sigh.

Femi rested his hand on Rudy’s shoulder. ‘Come on, they must be. Your parents would search the whole town for you.’

‘Of course they would,’ Edie said. ‘A pack will do anything to look after one of its own—working together and helping each other is what packs do!’

‘Yeah, you’re right,’ Rudy said, nodding.

‘And that’s why he needs his pack,’ Femi said. Rudy’s eyes lit up.

‘He can join mine!’

Femi gulped.

‘*Really?*’ Edie’s eyebrow rose like a question mark. ‘You’re



just gonna go home and say, *Hey Mum, Dad, I've signed up a new member of the family!*

‘Why not?’ Rudy said. ‘They’ll love him. Wolves are fiercely loyal, you know.’

‘Sure,’ Edie said, ‘but aren’t you asking them to be loyal to a *total stranger*?’

Rudy squirmed awkwardly. ‘But he’s all on his own and needs help. Look at him.’

Femi smiled, stroking the cub. ‘He is lovely, but I can’t see your parents going for this.’

‘Whatever.’ Rudy shrugged. He stared into the cub’s dark eyes, and the warmth of the little furry bundle seeped through him. He’d only been holding the cub for a minute, but already Rudy couldn’t imagine them being apart.

‘Come on,’ Rudy said. ‘Let’s go home!’



The sun was sinking behind the jumbled roofs and spires of Cobble Cross as Rudy and his friends arrived at Longfang Row.

Despite needing to investigate a few flowerbeds and chase some suspicious litter, the cub had tottered along happily beside them. This made Rudy even more convinced that the little one wanted to stay with him, despite his friends' doubts.

'OK, we're here,' Rudy said, scooping up the cub.

'Good luck persuading your parents to keep him,' Femi said, and Edie flashed a wry smile.

'I don't need luck,' Rudy replied. 'Mum and Dad will love him!'

Femi and Edie exchanged a look, still unconvinced.



The warm, inviting smell of roast chicken was filling the kitchen as Rudy came in, holding the cub behind his back. But before he could say, *Hi!* and introduce his new friend, the smoke alarm began to—  
*BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!*

Dad quickly shut the oven, while Mum frantically waved a tea towel to silence the blaring box.

As the cub craned his neck to sniff out the delicious dinner, Rudy decided to go for it. 'I was thinking . . . we should get a wolf cub,' he announced.

'Whatever for?' Dad asked, scratching his beard.





‘Oh Rudy, we haven’t got time for a wolf cub.’ Mum sighed, fanning the steam off a saucepan of boiled spuds.

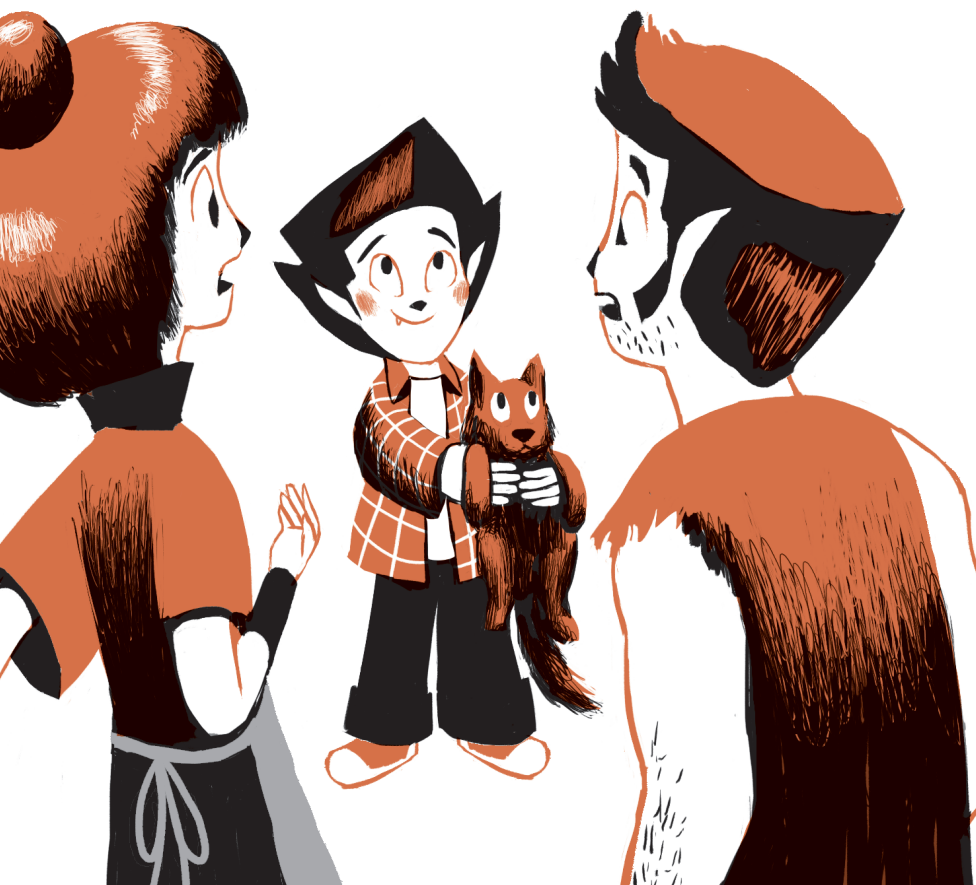
‘Not even one that’s lost his pack?’ The pleading sound in Rudy’s voice made his parents look up.



Their eyes opened wide as Rudy revealed the cub.

‘Oh . . .’ Mum said, and words failed her.

‘Goodness!’ Dad said. He began to shake his head. ‘He can’t stay here. This house is already busier than a motorway on a bank holiday!’



‘I’ll look after him!’ Rudy pleaded.

‘You’ve got enough to do,’ Mum said.

‘There’s your homework, your chores . . . and your howling! Mr Pierce says your technique needs a lot of work.’

‘Cubs are a big responsibility, young man,’ Dad said and began carving the chicken.

‘I can be responsible,’ Rudy said as the cub jumped onto the lino.

‘Can you?’ Mum frowned.

Rudy opened his mouth to protest, but nothing came out. Inside, his determination to prove them wrong began to grow.

‘Don’t worry, son. His pack will find him,’ Dad said. ‘And they’ll take care of him.’

‘We can’t just leave him out . . . *there!*’ Rudy protested. ‘Something bad might happen.’

‘Something like *that*?’ Mum pointed towards the dryer, where the cub was playfully yanking a woolly jumper out of the laundry basket.

‘You’re kidding!’ Dad exclaimed.

‘Drop it wolf . . . *Wolfie*!’ Rudy cried, pulling on the jumper. But it became a game and . . .





‘Oh, that was my favourite jumper!’ Dad groaned.

‘Never mind, dear. You can get a new one now,’ Mum said, hiding a smile as she stirred the gravy.

‘Sorry,’ Rudy said, peering through the new hole in the jumper. Dad stared back, his face like thunder.

‘OK. Let’s just enjoy dinner,’ Mum said and held up two plates loaded with chicken and potatoes. ‘We can decide what to do with that little one in the morning.’

After dinner, Rudy picked up Wolfie and headed for the stairs.

‘He can sleep down here.’ Mum pointed to the laundry basket, which she’d lined with Dad’s old jumper.

‘OK.’ Rudy sighed.

As Wolfie made himself comfy, Rudy leaned in and they hooked claws. ‘Don’t worry,’ he whispered. ‘I’ll look after you—*wolf-promise.*’