



“HISS!”

“WOOF!”

“MIAOOOOOW!”

“Someone catch Coco!” Elsa yelled above the din, as her tiny puppy tore round the sofa with two huge cats hot on her chocolate-brown tail.

The six Puppy Clubbers were gathered at Elsa’s for their weekly meeting, but calm

had turned to chaos after Elsa's brother, Milo, left the sitting-room door open. The family's cats Juno and Lupo had darted in, cornered Coco in a pincer movement, and pounced! Luckily, Coco had leaped out of the way, but now everyone was trying to rescue the terrified puppy as she skittered across the wooden floor.

"Grab the cats!" Elsa shouted at Milo.

"I'm trying!" he shot back, finally making a successful grab for Juno.

Then Mum appeared, grim-faced.

"What on earth is going on?"

Coco sidled over to Elsa, whimpering. Elsa plucked the tiny puppy up into her arms and cuddled her tight. "It's the cats' fault," she said crossly.

Mum bent down and picked up Lupo, who, now there was no puppy to chase, had stopped to wash her tail.



“Elsa, didn’t we agree to keep Coco and the cats apart until they start to get along?” Mum said. “Coco’s your responsibility!”

“But—” began Elsa.

Mum held up her hand. "No buts. She's your puppy." She took Lupo into the kitchen and returned for Juno, who was struggling in Milo's arms, before shutting the door behind her.

There was an awkward silence. Elsa blinked away angry tears. She hated being told off in front of her friends. She glared at Milo. "That was your fault! You *know* you're supposed to shut the kitchen door so the cats can't get to Coco!"

Milo snatched up his comic. "I'm sorry, OK!" he said, storming out of the room.

"Oh my gosh, Elsa! Poor you! And poor Coco," Jaya cried, reaching over to stroke Coco's ears.

Arlo held out the tin of cookies he'd brought. "Make you feel better?"

Elsa shook her head.

"Those cats are fast," said Daniel.





Willow nodded. “They’ve really got it in for Coco.”

Elsa groaned. This was not making her feel any better.

Harper put her arm round Elsa. “I’m sure they’ll get used to her ... eventually.”

“Will they?” said Elsa, slumping on to the sofa with Coco on her knee.

“I’m sure they will,” said Arlo. “Look, everything’s OK now.”

“Everything’s *not* OK!” Elsa said, her voice breaking with emotion. “Ever since Coco arrived, the cats have been awful! She just wants to be friends but they always hiss at her or swipe a paw, or chase her! That’s why we’re trying to keep them apart. But it’s not working. Mum’s so stressed and I’m worried...” Elsa paused, not wanting to voice her worst fear.

“What?” Daniel asked, looking puzzled.

“That she’ll send Coco back to Underdogs!” Elsa blurted out. Her eyes started to fill with tears at the thought of having to send Coco back to the rescue centre owned by Jaya’s auntie Ashani.

Willow’s dark eyes grew wide. “She wouldn’t?”

Jaya sat down next to Elsa and patted her shoulder. “You’ve just got to give it time. After all, this was the cats’ home first and now they have to share it with a puppy who’s getting all your attention. Maybe they’re jealous?”

“Well, they shouldn’t be. I love my cats, but Coco needs me – she’s still a baby.” Elsa fondled Coco’s tufty ears. The puppy’s eyes were drooping. She was clearly tired after all the drama.





“Perhaps you could try distracting them,” said Harper, blowing her thick auburn fringe from her eyes. “Give them a toy when Coco’s around.”

“Maybe.” Elsa sighed. “I have to try something, as this isn’t working. For a start, I’m going to make a sign for every door saying: PLEASE SHUT!”

Daniel’s green eyes lit up. “How about a stair gate?”

“How would that help?” asked Elsa.

“You could put it across the kitchen doorway,” Daniel explained. “Then you could leave the door open so Coco and the cats can see and smell each other without getting too close!”

“We have an old stair gate,” said Willow brightly. “I can call home and ask Dad to bring it when he picks me up.”

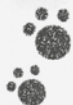
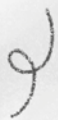
“That would be ace. Thanks, guys,

those are great ideas," said Elsa. "Can we write them down?"

Jaya, who was currently Club Scribbler, reached in her bag for the Puppy Club notebook. She turned to a fresh page and wrote:

Coco and the cats - Operation Friendship

1. Stair gate to keep Coco and cats separate.
2. Posters to remind people (Milo!) to shut doors.
3. Give cats attention too, so they don't feel left out.
4. Distract cats from Coco with toys, etc.
5. Give it time!



“Hopefully these ideas will make things go a bit more smoothly,” said Jaya.

“I hope so,” said Elsa. “You heard Mum. She’s made it clear Coco’s my responsibility so I’ll have to sort this out by myself!”

“Hey, you’ve got us too, remember!” said Harper, giving Elsa a friendly nudge.

Arlo grinned. “Exactly! We’re here to help.”

Willow sprang up. “Operation Friendship is go! Coco and your cats will be best buddies in no time!”

Coco gave a tiny bark as she shifted on Elsa’s knee, making everyone laugh. “Thanks, guys,” Elsa said, feeling a tiny bit better.

“Right, shall we get on with the meeting?” said Daniel, who was Puppy

Club's Top Dog this month.

It had only been a week since the six friends had taken their puppies home and as the animals weren't allowed to mix yet, they'd agreed to hold club meetings at a different house every Saturday afternoon after they'd helped out at Underdogs.

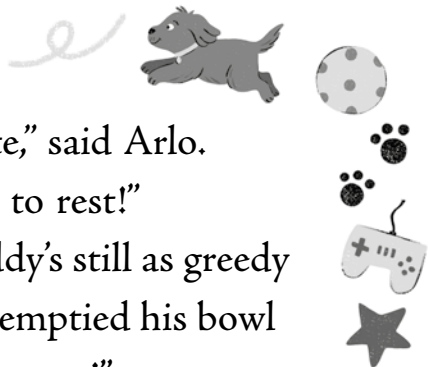
Together they chorused the Puppy Club promise: "We promise to love and protect puppies everywhere!"

"So how are the other puppies doing?" Daniel asked.

Willow grinned. "Peanut's super cute but he does like to chew *everything*! Dad's slippers are his favourite!"

"Minnie is adorable!" Harper said dreamily. "Though she gets so sleepy. We're lucky if she can get through a ten-minute game of fetch!"





“Dash is the opposite,” said Arlo.
“We have to force him to rest!”

Daniel laughed. “Teddy’s still as greedy as ever. As soon as he’s emptied his bowl he’s sniffing around for more!”

“Bonnie loves her doggie treats too,” said Jaya. “My sisters and I have been practising recall with her but unless we have treats, she ignores us!”

“A pup after my own heart!” Arlo grinned, biting into a chocolate cookie.

Feeling better, Elsa helped herself to a biscuit too. Coco opened one eye and sniffed. “Sorry, Coco, not for you!” she said. “We don’t want you to get sick. Talking of which, is anyone else feeling a bit nervous about the trip to the vet next weekend?”

“Nervous?” Willow exclaimed. “No way. The sooner our pups get their

vaccinations, the sooner we can have puppy play dates!”

Elsa cuddled Coco tighter. “I guess so. It’s just the thought of that big needle!”

The puppies were going to be ten weeks old the following Saturday. The Puppy Clubbers had all registered with the same vet and were taking their puppies for their jobs at the same time.

“Willow’s right,” Daniel reassured Elsa. “The vaccinations protect the puppies from nasty bugs – once they’ve had them we can take them for walks and they can mix with other dogs!”

“My vet books say we should wait a week after that before they start mixing,” said Jaya. “So that’s two weeks today.”

Harper’s green eyes sparkled. “Then the fun begins!”

“Oh!” Willow cried, leaping up again.





“How about we have a puppy party, to celebrate?”

“Great idea!” said Elsa excitedly.

Jaya frowned. “Wouldn’t it be a bit chaotic, all the pups chasing round together?”

Willow rolled her eyes. “Jaya, where’s your sense of fun?”

“You’re right,” said Jaya, her face breaking into a smile. “It would be amazing!”

“Of course it would. They’ll all be so happy to see each other,” said Daniel. “Hey! Ashani could come with Lulu. For a family reunion!” Lulu, the puppies’ mum, had been at Underdogs but now she lived with Jaya’s aunt.

“Awesome idea!” Arlo cried.

“We can ask her when we go round to see Lulu tomorrow,” said Jaya.

“And I’ll check with Mum and Dad to see if we can have the party in our garden,” said Willow.

Jaya nodded. “OK. Shall we do it on Sunday, a week after their jabs?”

Everyone nodded.

“Maybe we should bake a celebration cake,” said Harper.

“Two cakes!” Arlo licked his lips. “One for the pups and one for us! As Snack Supremo, I’ll look at recipes.”

“And I’ll make the invitations,” said Harper.

“We could do puppy face paints based on our Puppy Club code names?” Elsa suggested.

“Brilliant!” Daniel said. “I’ve got some new face paints I can bring.”

Jaya looked thoughtful. “How about we make a puppy agility course?”

Willow high-fived her. "Fab idea. I'll help you with that, Jaya." She looked over at Elsa. "Why don't you write one of your poems, in honour of the big day, Elsa?"

Elsa beamed. "I'd love to!"

Jaya picked up her pen and made some notes:



Puppy Club Party

Sunday 6th May, 12 p.m.

Roles:

Jaya and Willow: agility course

Daniel: face paints

Arlo: cakes

Harper: invitations

Elsa: poem

Coco suddenly hopped down from Elsa's knee and began sniffing round the room.

“Uh-oh!” cried Elsa, recognizing the signs. “I think she needs a wee!” She leaped to her feet, picked up Coco and hurried out of the room. As she raced through the kitchen to the back door, Juno and Lupo sat watching from their sunny spot on the windowsill. Coco gave them a playful bark. The cats hissed in reply. Elsa wagged her finger at them. “You two need to be kinder. Whether you like it or not, Coco is here to stay!”