

## Henry and Mudge

## The First Book of their Adventures

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Henry had no brothers and no sisters. "I want a brother," he told his parents. "Sorry," they said. Henry had no friends on his street. "I want to live on a different street," he told his parents. "Sorry," they said. Henry had no pets at home. "I want to have a dog," he told his parents. "Sorry," they *almost* said. But first they looked at their house with no brothers and sisters. Then they looked at their street with no children. Then they looked at Henry's face. Then they looked at each other. "Okay," they said. "I want to hug you!" Henry told his parents. And he did.

## Mudge

Henry searched for a dog. "Not just any dog," said Henry. "Not a short one," he said. "Not a curly one," he said. "And no pointed ears." Then he found Mudge. Mudge had floppy ears, not pointed. And Mudge had straight fur, not curly. But Mudge was short. "Because he's a puppy," Henry said. "He'll grow." And did he ever! He grew out of his puppy cage. He grew out of his dog cage. He grew out of seven collars in a row. And when he finally stopped growing. . .he weighed one hundred and eighty pounds, he stood three feet tall, and drooled. "I'm glad you're not short," Henry said. And Mudge licked him, then sat on him. Henry used to walk alone.

When he walked he used to worry about tornadoes, ghosts, biting dogs, and bullies. He walked as fast as he could. He looked straight ahead. He never looked back. But now he walked to school with Mudge. And now when he walked, he thought about vanilla ice cream, rain, rocks and good dreams. He walked to school but not too fast. He walked to school and sometimes backwards. He walked to school and patted Mudge's big head, happy.

### Mudge

Mudge loved Henry's room. He loved the dirty socks. He loved the stuffed bear. He loved the fish tank. But mostly he loved Henry's bed. Because in Henry's bed was Henry. Mudge loved to climb in with Henry.

Then he loved to smell him. He smelled his lemon hair. He smelled his milky mouth. He smelled his soapy ears. He smelled his chocolate fingers. Then he put his head by Henry's head. He looked at the fish tank. He looked at the bear. He looked at Henry. He licked him. And he fell asleep.

## Mudge

One day Mudge took a walk without Henry. The sun was shining, the birds were flying, the grass smelled sweet. Mudge couldn't wait for Henry. So he left. He went down one road, sniffing the bushes, then down another road, kicking up dust. He went through a field, across a stream, into some pine trees. And when he came out on the

to her side, he was lost. He couldn't smell Henry. He couldn't smell his front porch. He couldn't smell the street he lived on. Mudge looked all around and didn't see anything or anyone he knew. He whined a little, alone without Henry. Then he lay down, alone without Henry. He missed Henry's bed.

## Henry

Henry thought Mudge would be with him always. He thought Mudge made everything safe. He thought Mudge would never go away. And when Mudge did go away, when Henry called and called but Mudge didn't come, Henry's heart hurt and he cried for an hour. But when he finished crying, Henry said "Mudge loves me. He wouldn't leave. He must

be lost." So Henry walked and walked, and he called and called, and he looked and looked for his dog Mudge. He walked down one road, then down another road. The sun shone as Henry ran through a field, calling and calling. The birds flew past as he stood beside a stream, calling and calling. And the tears fell again as he looked at the empty pine trees for his lost dog. "Mudge!" he called, one last time. And Mudge woke up from his lonely sleep, then came running. Every day when Henry woke up, he saw Mudge's big head. And every day when Mudge woke up, he saw Henry's small face. They ate breakfast at the same time; they ate supper at the same time. And when Henry was at school, Mudge just lay around and waited. Mudge never went for a

walk without Henry again. And Henry never worried the Mudge would leave.

Because sometimes, in thier dreams, they saw long silent roads, big wide fields, deep streams, and pine trees. In those dreams, Mudge was alone and Henry was alone. So when Mudge woke up and knew Henry was with him, he remembered the dream and stayed closer. And when Henry woke up and knew Mudge was with him, he remembered the dream and the looking and the calling and the fear and he knew he would never lose Mudge again.