



CHAPTER

7

A Boy Named Charlie

OUTSIDE THE RESTAURANT, THE SUN WAS warm, and the breeze coming through the half-low-ered windows of the jeep carried all sorts of inter-esting smells and sounds. Bo could hear the voices of several children playing hide-and-seek outside a large van parked nearby. He was drawn to the happy sounds and stood on the car seat wagging his stubby tail, his head partway out the window.

There were two small boys and two girls. As one of the boys came to hide near the jeep, Bo woofed a greeting, wagging his whole rear end. The startled boy staggered back.

“Watch out now, Charlie, that dog may bite,” said his teenage sister, Myra. She grabbed the boy and dragged him away from the car.

“Will not!” the little boy protested as he struggled from her grasp. “He likes me.” Before Myra

could stop him, Charlie ran back to the jeep. He stood on his toes and reached for the pup.

Still wagging with all his might, Bo stretched his head down as far as he could to lick the boy’s hand. “See! I told ya,” Charlie said, holding his hand up to receive the pup’s kisses.

Myra reached into the jeep and patted Bo’s shoulder. Satisfied that he was harmless, she then held Charlie up to the window. The happy pup washed his face with slurpy kisses as the little boy squealed with pleasure.

Bo was instinctively drawn to Charlie. The boy seemed so vulnerable, so gentle. The little pointer couldn’t have known that the happy, carefree child was seriously ill. His family had sacrificed their energies, their time, and all of their financial re-sources to battle the cancerous growth living inside Charlie’s body. The boy seemed to make progress from time to time through the countless treatments suggested by the numerous physicians with whom they had consulted.

The emotional seesaw had taken its toll, and each member of the family dealt with the stress in his or her own way. This was the third year that they had made the trip north to the largest chil-dren’s hospital in the country.

This time the information after his examination

BODACIOUS BO: THE POUND PRINCE

and treatment was devastating. The cancer had spread. His system was weak and incapable of sustaining any more treatments. His parents were faced with the task of hiding the truth from their children until they could compose themselves and make plans for the immediate future.

“Can I have him, Myra?” Charlie pleaded. “Can I?”

“No, Charlie, he’s somebody else’s dog,” Myra said as she sat her little brother down next to the jeep.

Charlie started to cry. “Please, Myra, I need him!”

Myra looked down at the small, frail boy. A painful sorrow filled her and lodged in her throat. As she tried to explain to her brother why he couldn’t have the dog, her voice faltered, and she struggled to catch her breath. She looked at Bo, who was hanging out the window, eager to go with them. Still crying, Charlie made his way to the jeep door trying to jump high enough to touch the little pointer.

“See, Myra, he needs me, too! Please, oh, please! I’ll never ask for anything ever again.”

Charlie’s words cut like a knife. Myra suddenly felt dizzy and had to lean against the jeep to steady herself. For the entire time that Charlie had been

A BOY NAMED CHARLIE

ill, she had lived in denial. She had always clung to the hope that he would get well. But at that instant she realized that might be a false hope. Everything became clear to her, and she could now deal with it.

“Sure, Charlie, I think God wants you to have that puppy.” Myra lifted the lock button on the jeep door and opened it. Bo happily jumped into Charlie’s waiting arms and knocked him over.

Myra helped her brother up and started running. “Come on you guys, let’s get in the van.”

The other children leaped into action. Fred,

