

The Mooli River

‘Hey, Rosie, girl. What’s wrong?’

Rosie stood beside my bed and looked at me with her big brown eyes. Then she pushed her wet nose under my arm. Rosie is my dog. She’s a black and white border collie. She wanted me to get up.

‘Rosie, I’m trying to read.’ I showed her my book. ‘This is a really good story, you know.’

She put her nose on the book. Now the page was wet.

‘Yuk. Thanks, Rosie.’

I put down the book and stood up. ‘Okay, okay. What do you want to show me?’

Rosie ran downstairs and into the living room. She looked out of the window and barked. Rosie loves this window. It’s at the front of the house and it’s very large and low – she can easily see out. She sits and waits to see another dog, then she barks and barks and barks.

‘Who’s there, girl? What is it?’ I followed her to the window and looked out.

We live in Locklear. It’s a small country town and our house is on a hill. So, from our place, you can see nearly all of the town and some of the Mooli River. The river is only a narrow one. It comes down from the hills and cuts across the fields. Then it runs through the centre of town. On a good day, you can see it shining in the sun. But that day, the river was grey. It was only four o’clock but the sky was dark and rain fell heavily on the town below.

The wet street was empty.

I patted Rosie’s head.



‘There’s nothing there, girl. Only the rain.’

Mum called out from the kitchen. ‘Ryan, I’m making a cup of tea. Do you want one?’

‘No thanks.’

Rosie barked and pressed her nose against the window.

Mum came in with her tea and sat down. ‘Ah, it’s nice to put my feet up for a minute or two. What’s wrong with Rosie this afternoon? She’s been in and out of the kitchen – in and out, in and out. She can’t sit still.’

‘I know. She wanted me to come to the window but there’s nothing to see.’

Mum looked out at the grey sky. ‘When is this rain going to stop?’ She called Rosie to her side. ‘Is it the rain, girl? Do you want to go for a W-A-L-K?’ She scratched behind Rosie’s ears. ‘I can’t say the word, can I? Or you’ll be running to get your collar and lead. Maybe the rain will stop soon.’

‘It started on Sunday, didn’t it?’ I looked out of the window again. Today was Friday.

Rosie ran back to me. I grabbed her and pushed her to the floor. ‘Poor Rosie can’t go out.’ I held her front paws. ‘I’ve got you now. I’ve got you now. You can’t go anywhere.’

Rosie jumped up then dropped to the floor again. She wanted to play. She was only two and a half years old and she was always full of energy.

My mobile phone rang. I took it out of the back pocket of my jeans and answered it.

‘Hi, Dad.’ Rosie jumped on me and I pushed her off. ‘Get off, Rosie. Get off.’

‘Ryan, where are you?’ Dad asked quickly.

‘I’m at home.’

‘Good. Is Mum there?’

‘Yeah. What’s wrong?’

‘Pete Blackwood just rang me.’

Mum and Dad have been friends with the Blackwoods for years. They used to live in Locklear but then they moved to a town further up the river.

‘There’s a lot of water coming down the river,’ said Dad. ‘It’s going to flood.’

‘What?’ I jumped to my feet. Rosie stopped playing and looked up at me.

‘The river’s going to flood,’ Dad said again. ‘It’s going to be bad, Ryan. We need to get people out. We need to evacuate all the houses and shops near the river. Tell Mum. Get your uniform on. And I’ll see you at SES headquarters. And bring Rosie!’

Mum was on her feet. ‘What is it? What’s wrong?’

I ran to the stairs. Mum and Rosie followed me all the way up to my bedroom. ‘The river’s going to flood! We need to get people out. I’m meeting Dad at SES headquarters.’

Dad has always been a volunteer with the SES – the State Emergency Service. You have to be sixteen years old to be a volunteer. I turned sixteen this year. So now I’m a volunteer too. I grabbed my orange SES uniform and my wetsuit and took off my T-shirt and jeans.

Mum hurried into her bedroom and looked out of the window. ‘The rain has stopped and the river isn’t flooding yet,’ she called. ‘Maybe the water won’t come very high.’

I put on my wetsuit.

Rosie jumped up on my bed. Then jumped back down to the floor. She barked at me.

‘Yes, I know, girl. We have to hurry.’

Rosie understood. She’s an SES volunteer too – she’s a Rescue Dog. Dad took her to classes for nearly two years. He’s her handler. I wanted to be her handler, but you have

to be eighteen. I helped Dad with Rosie's training at home.

I put my orange coat on over my wetsuit. 'Do you remember your training, Rosie? Do you?'

'Ryan!' Mum suddenly called to me from her bedroom. 'Quick!'

Rosie and I ran to her.

'Oh no, no, no, no, no.' Mum was at the window. She pointed at the river in the fields.

'There's a wave!' I cried. 'A wave is coming down the river.'

The narrow river was now wide. And a wall of water – a metre high, maybe two – slowly moved across the fields, towards the town.

I ran to the stairs. Rosie and Mum quickly followed.

'Dad was right. It's going to be bad,' I shouted.

Rosie ran down the stairs in front of me. I ran to the back door and she was already there. She scratched at a small green cupboard beside the door. Quickly, I opened the cupboard and grabbed her SES coat and her collar and lead.

Mum helped me to put Rosie's coat and collar on. 'Be careful, Ryan, won't you? You've only just finished your training. This is your first SES job. And Rosie's first job too. Stay safe.'

'We'll be okay, Mum. Don't worry, we'll be okay.'