

Beside the lake

‘There’s nothing here,’ said Sally. She wasn’t happy. She got out of the car and her little dog Callie jumped out onto the ground.

‘Nothing here?’ said Sally’s mother. ‘Look at that beautiful lake, for a start!’ She took a box of food from the back of the car. ‘It’s so nice and quiet. Oh, look! There’s a pelican. Look, there.’

Sally looked out across the water. In the middle of the lake, a pelican flapped its wings and slowly took off. Sally watched the large white bird fly away, over the tops of the trees.

Callie barked and ran down to the edge of the lake.

‘Sally, can you carry this box, please?’

Sally took the box and followed her mother to the front door of the holiday house. Callie ran up from the lake and went into the house with them.

It was the summer holidays and they were at Pelican Lake, four hours south of Sydney.

‘I want to be with my friends,’ said Sally.

‘Please, Sally, I’ve told you – I can’t work at home. I won’t get the job finished on time. It’s too hard when everyone is on holiday. And I can’t get enough sleep with those young people next door partying all night, every night. Here, I’ll be able to work. It’s only for two weeks.’

Sally’s mother did designs for fabrics on her computer. Sally thought the fabrics she designed were beautiful. She remembered her mum was excited when she got the new job.



‘Sally, Sally, the manager of that small hotel on Hill Street just phoned. He wants me to do the fabric for their new curtains.’

‘Mum, that’s great.’

‘I know. But he hasn’t given me much time – only four weeks. I’m going to be very busy.’

Sally helped her mum put the food in the kitchen. ‘Liz is going to miss Callie,’ she said.

Liz was Sally’s best friend. Liz loved Callie. She lived in a small apartment and she couldn’t have a dog of her own, so she spent lots of time with Callie.

Sally’s mum took her computer into the living room and opened it. ‘Come on. Let’s make sure the Wi-Fi works. You and Liz can talk about Callie all you like then.’

‘It’s not the same,’ replied Sally.

‘Sally, please stop it.’

‘Oh, all right. But I’m going to talk to her a lot.’

‘Okay,’ said Sally’s mum. ‘Now, let’s see ... Yes, good. It’s working.’

Sally walked down to the edge of the lake. It was very quiet. The only noise came from the dry leaves and branches under her feet. On the other side of the water she could see someone fishing in a small boat.

When she went back to the house, she saw Callie run under it.

‘What are you doing there?’ said Sally. She saw a dark shape under the house. It was a canoe.

She pulled it out into the light and looked at it carefully. There were no holes and there was a paddle in the bottom. Sally pulled the canoe to the edge of the water and ran back to the house.

‘There you are,’ said her mum. ‘Could you take Callie for a walk? She was in the car for a long time.’

‘I can’t,’ replied Sally. ‘I found a canoe. I’m going to take it out on the lake. I’ll take Callie for a walk later.’

‘Oh, okay,’ said her mother. ‘But be careful. And don’t go too far.’

Sally looked at Callie’s sad little face and felt bad. But she told herself that all King Charles spaniels, like Callie, had sad faces.

Sally climbed in and pushed away from the edge with the paddle. She heard her mother laugh.

‘What’s so funny?’ Sally turned her head to look at her mother.

Callie was on the back of the boat – like a bird. She barked at Sally.

‘She jumped on when you pushed off,’ said Sally’s mum. ‘She doesn’t want to wait for her walk!’

‘Oh, come on then, you silly dog,’ said Sally. She smiled and carefully put Callie in front of her, between her feet.

Sally paddled away slowly. She pulled the paddle through the water on one side of the boat and then on the other. ‘I haven’t done this for a long time,’ she said to Callie. But soon she remembered how to control the boat with the paddle.

Sally stayed close to the shore. She went past a large shed with two large windows. It looked very old, and the land around it was very untidy – there was an old bath on the ground, a baby’s cot and some old chairs. Sally paddled on. She passed a few small houses close to the water but she didn’t see any people. Then, after about fifteen minutes, she saw a small beach and some cars parked on a road. There was a building on the other side of the road, with a sign above the door: Pelican Lake General Store and Post Office.

‘Come on, Callie, let’s go home. Mum will be pleased to hear there’s a shop.’

When she paddled back past the old shed, she noticed a washing line beside it. There were six or seven pieces of square cloth on the line. They flapped in the wind. They were all the same size and Sally wanted to see what they were.

She paddled a little closer. Suddenly Callie jumped out of the boat into the shallow water. She barked and ran out of the water, towards the shed. Sally climbed out of the canoe and ran after her.

‘Get that dog off my land!’ A woman rushed out of the door of the shed. She shouted angrily at Callie. ‘Go on! GO!’

Sally ran to Callie. Suddenly a spray of water hit them both hard. Callie barked. Sally grabbed her, rushed back to the canoe and paddled home fast.

‘Mum, Mum, there’s a horrible woman beside the lake. She shouted at Callie – and she sprayed us and ...’

Sally’s mother looked up from her computer. ‘Wait, wait, slow down. She *sprayed* you? What with?’

‘With water.’

‘With water?’

‘Yes. She had a thing near her front door. It was like a sprinkler, but it shoots at you – like a water pistol! And we got really wet.’

‘Well, don’t go there again!’

‘But I don’t understand why she hates Callie so much,’ said Sally.

‘I don’t know, Sally. Some people just don’t like dogs. Don’t go near her, okay? Now I have to get on with my work,’ and she turned back to the computer.



'I'm going to tell Liz about it, then,' Sally said. She went to her bedroom.

'Don't talk for too long,' her mother called out to her.

'Don't worry. I'll Skype her. It's free on Wi-Fi – and she'll want to see Callie.'