

The Bean put both hands over his mouth and watched, his eyes dancing, as Buddy licked every drop of syrup off Lizzie's plate, then went after Charles's. "Mine, too!" he said, holding up his plate so that syrup began to drip onto his lap.

Quickly, Lizzie grabbed it and put it down for Buddy. "There you go," she said lovingly. Buddy's tail wagged so hard that it thumped against Lizzie's chair. He vacuumed up every bit of syrup, then sat back and licked his chops as he looked hopefully at Lizzie. "That's it," she said, holding up her hands. Mom and Dad never seemed to end up with extra syrup on their plates.

She hummed as she cleared the table and stuck the dishes into the dishwasher. Like her mom, she was looking forward to a nice, relaxing Sunday. Lizzie had been really busy lately, between school, volunteering at the animal shelter,

and her dog-walking business. She and her best friend, Maria, were partners in AAA Dynamic Dog Walkers, and they walked about a dozen dogs every single day after school. Even dog-crazy Lizzie had to admit that sometimes it all seemed like a little too much.

“Hey, Lizzie, want to —” This time, Charles stopped himself. “I mean, hey, Beautiful Genius, want to play catch out back?”

“No, thanks.” Lizzie was really enjoying her Pickle Jinx name. “I’m going to work on my scrapbook.” Lizzie kept a scrapbook of all the puppies the Petersons had fostered, and it needed updating.

She was up in her room, pasting in a picture of a sweet, energetic chocolate Lab named Cocoa, when the phone rang. “Lizzie!” called her mom after a few minutes. “It’s your aunt Amanda. She needs your help with a puppy.”

