

V.I.P.
(Very Important Pup!)



Katy Cannon

•
stripes

Chapter One



“Lulu, we’re here!” Abi bounced on her toes as she looked up at the powder-blue door with the words “Pooch Parlour” curling above it in silver letters. “We’re really here!”

At her side, Lulu the bichon frise beat her fluffy white tail excitedly against the pavement.

“Should we just go in, do you think?” Abi asked. There was a sign on the door saying “All Dogs Welcome”, but there was also one saying “Closed”.

 Pooch Parlour 

Before Abi could decide, Lulu pushed her head against the door, making the bell attached to it chime.

“I guess we’re going in!” Abi laughed.

Inside, Pooch Parlour was everything Abi had dreamed it would be. This was her first visit since Aunt Tiffany had moved the parlour to a bigger space in central London.

She’d seen photos online, but they didn’t show the pictures of celebrities and their dogs on the walls, or the glass cases displaying every colour of grooming brush, all with sparkly diamonds in the handles.

“Abi, darling. You found us!” Aunt Tiffany appeared through a shimmering curtain behind the reception desk. “So sorry I had to rush off this morning. There’s a lot to do before we open for the day! But now I’m all yours, until our first client arrives.”



Abi smiled at her aunt as she bent down to unclip Lulu's lead. "That's OK. It *is* only just round the corner." In fact, she could almost see Pooch Parlour from the window of her candy-striped guest bedroom, but Aunt Tiffany had still drawn her a map showing exactly how to get from her flat to the parlour.

When Abi's parents had first told her that she'd be spending the whole summer with Aunt Tiffany, while they were away in America, she'd been nervous. She'd never spent so long apart from her mum and dad before. But Lulu had bumped her head against Abi's hand as if to say, *You'll still have me. We'll be OK*, and Abi realized that as long as she had Lulu with her, she'd never be lonely.

And *then* she'd remembered Pooch Parlour and forgotten to be nervous altogether. A whole summer at Aunt Tiffany's glamorous luxury dog-grooming salon sounded like far too much fun to waste time worrying!

Abi and her mum had filled her best backpack with clothes, and they'd packed all of Lulu's favourite toys in her own bag. And then, yesterday, the day had finally come! Mum and Dad had dropped her off at Aunt Tiffany's, and

Abi had hugged and kissed them, too excited to be upset about saying goodbye.

At the flat, Abi and Lulu were welcomed by Aunt Tiffany and Hugo, her miniature dachshund, who'd been wearing his very best tartan dressing gown!

As if he knew Abi was thinking of him, Hugo padded under the shiny pink curtain, dressed today in a stripy blue and white jumper that matched the one Aunt Tiffany was wearing. Lulu gave an excited woof when she spotted him and dashed over

to press her nose up against his side. Hugo gave a doggy sigh and stared at Abi with big eyes.



“Sorry, Hugo,” Abi said, with a shrug. “She likes you.”

Aunt Tiffany laughed, high and tinkling. “He likes her too, really. Lulu’s a lively one.”

At the sound of her name, Lulu looked up and barked.

“Dad calls her a bouncy cloud on legs,” Abi said, stroking Lulu’s head.

“Bichon frises are very fluffy dogs,” Aunt Tiffany agreed. “She must take a lot of grooming.”

“Every six to eight weeks,” Abi said. She’d read up on the best way to look after Lulu before she’d even been allowed to take her home. “Mum does it herself.”

They were a doggy family, Mum always said. Dad wrote books about dogs – and he’d been invited on a book tour to talk about them in bookshops and pet shops all over America that

summer. Mum, who was a vet specializing in looking after dogs and puppies, had gone with him, but they'd decided that Abi would have more fun staying with Aunt Tiffany. They'd promised to call her every night while they were away and Abi couldn't wait to talk to them that evening. She'd be able to tell them all about her first day at Pooch Parlour. She wondered how many dogs she'd get to meet...

Abi loved dogs more than anything, and she loved Lulu most of all! When she grew up, she planned to work with animals, just like her parents. But not to write about them, or look after them when they were sick. Abi wanted to work with animal actors – the dogs and cats and other pets that starred in some of her favourite TV shows and films. She had a feeling that a whole summer at Pooch Parlour would be fantastic practice!

Aunt Tiffany tilted her head to study Lulu. “Your mum does a great job of grooming Lulu,” she said, reaching down to pet the fluffy white dog. “But how do you think Lulu would like to have a proper Pooch Parlour makeover? After all, she has to look the part, if she’s going to be a Parlour dog.”



Abi’s eyes widened and Lulu gave an excited bark. “She’d love it. And so would I!”

“Wonderful.” Aunt Tiffany beamed and held open the shimmery pink curtain for them.

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“We’ll get Lulu into the spa, let her sniff our bubble baths, and see which one she likes best. After that, you can help me choose the perfect accessories for her. I’ve just got in a new range of glitter bows that I think you’re going to love!”