

CHARLIE & CHUCK

The Story of how a Boy and his Dog
helped save the World



By Michael Aloï

The Story of how a Boy and his Dog helped save the World!

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MJA Publishing
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To my wife Francine, my daughters Michelle and Lisa, and to the special four-legged friends who have been a major part of our lives: BooBoo, Jessie, and Honeybear

This book would not have been possible without their patience, help, and encouragement.

I love you all!

About the Author

Michael Aloï is a singer/songwriter from Westchester County, NY. He has dedicated a large portion of his life to working with special needs children. His belief in the therapeutic power of music has led him on a path to thousands of concerts for children in hospitals and special needs facilities over the past 25 years. He also recently started a non-profit, called Songs for Smiles, to get other musicians to work with children across the country. Running a close second to his family is his love of animals.

He is so excited to now bring his creative talents to children's books. His first book, "Charlie and Chuck," brings to life his love of children and dogs and hopes that it inspires others to experience the joy of pets.

He will soon be releasing an accompanying audio book that will not only bring the voices of Charlie and Chuck to life but also include songs written especially for the story.

You can contact me directly at charlieandchuckbook@gmail.com

SuperPaws for a Cause



FOR A CAUSE

SuperPawsForACause.com

A portion of the proceeds from this book will be donated to helping animal shelters and our four legged friends that need a home.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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Superpaws for a Cause

Animals helping the World

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THE “SUPERPOWER” of Pets!

Anyone who has a four-legged family member understands the superpowers our pets have. Now imagine if we could spread that positive spirit of love, peace, and happiness to everyone. It might just make the whole world a better place. A boy named Chuck soon discovers his own personal happiness and self-assurance when he meets his new furry best friend Charlie. Together, they embark on a mission to spread joy and happiness to everyone.

This is a heartwarming tale showing us what we can accomplish if we believe in something and someone we meet (even if that ‘someone’ is a dog) helps us make that dream come true.

The book includes positive affirmations to help all children improve their self-confidence and empathy. It also helps to promote the spirit of pet adoptions and all of the organizations that are sheltering animals awaiting adoption.

Content

[Chapter 1: Chuck Fortunato](#)

[Chapter 2: Charlie Fortuno](#)

[Chapter 3: Coming to America](#)

[Chapter 4: My Destiny](#)

[Chapter 5: Tug at first sight](#)

[Chapter 6: Show and Tell](#)

[Chapter 7: I Can See Clearly Now](#)

[Chapter 8: The Cool Dog in Town](#)

[Chapter 9: Guess who's coming to Dinner](#)

[Chapter 10: Oh Where, Oh where can my little dog be?](#)

[Chapter 11: Charlie is Missing](#)

[Chapter 12: Where are We?](#)

[Chapter 13: The World is Not the Same](#)

[Chapter 14: Sunday Dinner](#)

[Chapter 15: The Long Walk](#)

[Chapter 16: The Shelter](#)

[Chapter 17: The World's Greatest Dog Walker](#)

[Chapter 18: The Longest Day of my Life](#)

[Chapter 19: Best Friends – Together Again](#)

[Chapter 20: We CAN Change the World](#)

[Chapter 21: SuperPaws for a Cause](#)

[Epilogue](#)

Chapter 1: Chuck Fortunato



“I have a feeling today is going to be a rough day at school... Rough, rough, rough.”

Oh, hi! My name is Chuck Fortunato... pronounced four-two-nah-toe. My mom tells me my last name means, “to be lucky,” but that sounds like the

complete opposite of who I am! I live in New York City with my mom, sister, and grandma. I am 12 years old and people say I'm "going on 25"... whatever that means. I guess it means you grow up real fast when you're the "head" of the family. Ever since my dad left, I have tried my best to fill his shoes but it is a really hard job to do.

I have an older sister, Carla, who tries to help out, but at 16 she's in her own world and can sometimes make things even crazier. She can be a real pain, but I know that's how sisters are sometimes. I still love her. The time we spend together is even more limited now that she has discovered boys! Yuck!

I have my own issues too. It's hard sometimes just trying to fit into this crazy world. And at 12, that can be a real BIG puzzle to solve, especially since my family is always moving. There have even been times when we were homeless. Plus, with my "hand me down" outfits, I have trouble just trying to fit into... my clothes!

I feel like I'm so different and that I'll never be like the other kids in school. When I look in the mirror, I can only think of one word: LOSER. I will never make friends, especially the way I look. My hair is really, really RED and way too curly. My ears are too big and my nose is too long. I wear glasses, I have waaay too many freckles, and to make matters worse, I'm very shy. I sure wish I could find a way to make new friends.

My BIGGEST wish in life is to just have A best friend!

I know the world can be rough sometimes, but my mom taught me that everyone faces difficult days but we should try to make each day the best day that we can. Just be the best YOU, you can be! If you give it your best shot and work really hard and don't be afraid to fail, you can do anything you want. You CAN make a difference. and you CAN make this world a better place!

I have a feeling that my luck is about to change any day now.

Chapter 2: Charlie Fortuno



It's 8 am in the Caribbean as “Ruff, Ruff, Ruff” is echoing through the downtown streets of Santo Domingo. Charlie looks up into the morning sun, but all he can manage to say today is, “It’s been a rough morning. Ruff, ruff, ruff.”

“I hope this afternoon gets better. My tricks have not been working very well today and no one seems to notice me.” The sound of Charlie’s barks are growing louder and louder, “ruFF, rUFF, RUFF!”

Oh, hi! My name is Charlie Fortuno, better known as Charlie Mutt, as I am so affectionately called. I live... well... wherever my four feet take me...., which, so far, is all over the world! And you guessed it... I’m a dog! I have lived in quite a few homes during my travels and have taken on a lot of responsibility at my young age.

But it’s not easy... especially at the age of five. I am currently living in town in the Caribbean called Santo Domingo, with my mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, and sister Carlita. Carlita recently met Pierre, a French poodle from our neighborhood and I think they might be moving to Paris in the near future! I have been moving around a lot myself, just trying to find a place where I can fit in. This can be especially hard when you look like me. My tail is too long, my hair is too curly, my nose is too big, and my ears look like they belong on an elephant! I also have trouble seeing things clearly sometimes, so I just keep moving around hoping someone will like me and I’ll find a friend who I can do things with. I do, however, make a lot of people laugh with my gymnastic routines and doggie tricks.

My dad, Francesco, takes me on lots of adventurous walks and we meet lots of people for me to show off in front of. To help meet new people, he had this idea of hanging a sign on my collar that says, “My name is Charlie. What’s yours?” We get a lot of attention and almost everyone tells me their name. It was an amazing idea and we have met a lot of interesting people that way. My ultimate dream is to someday move to America and be on TV. Well, not just be on TV, but to star in my own TV show called “Doggy Detective,” where I travel the world, solve crimes, and make lots of friends. In reality, to tell you the truth, I’d be happy just watching detective shows on TV with a best friend! At the end of the day, I feel all alone, like I somehow don’t fit in. My dad has been my biggest supporter. He tells me all the time, “Someday, Charlie, I think you are going to change the world.” You know, I really think I can. One day, maybe I’ll find someone who is just like me and maybe together we CAN change the world. I think the time

has come for me to begin the next stop on my journey... America! There I can start chasing my dream!

Chapter 3: Coming to America



As Chuck sits in class at school at PS162 in New York City, daydreaming about how he will someday change the world, Charlie falls asleep during an afternoon nap, dreaming of continuing his world travels to a place he always wanted to go to: America. He pictures himself as Christopher Columbus, discovering a new world for the very first time as he sails with

his hair blowing in the wind perched high in the air on the front bow of a giant ocean liner.

He heard from his dad that America is known as the land of opportunity, a place where anything was possible. Charlie was ready to find out if that was true. He dreamed about living on a big ranch in Texas, skiing in the mountains of Colorado, making his film debut in Hollywood, and even running for president.

The next morning at breakfast, Charlie heard his family talking about how it may finally be time to let Charlie spread his wings and follow his dream. They would miss him, but they knew that he was destined for bigger things and that they needed to let him continue exploring the world. Besides, it would give them a reason to go to America someday to visit him. The cost of the trip was more than Francesco could afford, but fortunately for Charlie, Francesco had a friend that worked on a ship to get him a discount. Charlie had also earned enough money performing downtown that he would be able to pay his own way! “I guess hard work really does pay off,” said Mr. Fortuno. His family packed his doggie bag, handed him his ticket, gave him a big hug, and dropped him off at Pier 47, where the sign on the dock read “Next Stop: America.”

Charlie ran straight to the bow of the ship with his head held high and tail wagging in the morning wind. He gave two goodbye barks to Francesco and his family, waving from the dock. Now he was off to America.

The adventure was about to begin! Charlie immediately began thinking about all the things that he was going to do and he couldn't wait to get there. The trip would last for many days and the next couple of days were rough for Charlie. Being all alone and already missing his Caribbean family he had some moments of doubt.

Did he make the right decision? Was he going to find a loving family to live with? Would he be able to make new friends? Would he find a best friend? He had a dream and a plan. He would find a way to make this work, no matter what.

When he fell asleep on his last night before his arrival, he returned to his dream about America and a happy smile returned to his face. The next morning he would be there.

Chapter 4: My Destiny



It was a cloudy October morning as Charlie ran off the ship and onto West 65th Street in New York City. He couldn't believe how tall the buildings were. They were even more amazing than he had seen on TV. They were so tall he had to roll over and lie on his back just to see the top of the Empire State Building.

No sooner than his back hit the ground, he met his first friend as a passerby bent down to rub his tummy and said, “Hi Charlie, my name is Ben.” The sign on his collar from Francesco had come in handy. He had only been there for a few minutes and he already felt welcome in his new hometown, New York City. As a bonus, Ben offered Charlie a doggie bone cookie he had stashed away in his pocket for a moment like this.

“Wow,” Charlie said to himself. “This is going to be great! The city LOOKED amazing, but it was his nose that felt most welcome there. The smell of delicious food filled the air in every direction and his nose was leading the way to find what awaited him at the end of the most “delicious” scent.

As Charlie was navigating the streets of the city to find his next snack, Chuck Fortunato was on his way to school. Today was show-and-tell, and he still didn’t have any idea what he could talk about. That was until one magical moment would change his life forever!

Chapter 5: Tug at first sight



As a ball started rolling his way, Chuck bent down to grab it when he suddenly felt something tugging on it from the other side. He was now kneeling face to face with a dog. For a moment, he thought he was looking in a mirror, making him imagine what he might look like as a dog. Both of them had curly red hair, big feet, a big nose, and larger than normal ears. In

fact, they looked so much alike they couldn't stop staring at each other. I think I just discovered my twin brother! The only problem is that he is a dog! Chuck thought. Unable to see the dog's collar from that angle, Chuck muttered, "Hey buddy, what's your name?" It was at that moment he truly thought he was dreaming when he heard the dog SAY, "Charlie, Charlie Fortuno. What's yours?"

"Woah," said Chuck, as he looked up and asked the crowd that had now gathered around them, "Did you hear that?" "Hear what?" the crowd asked, "It's hard to hear anything besides that excited barking." "No, no. Did you hear that dog just speak to me?" All they could do was stare at Chuck with puzzled faces. Chuck thinks to himself that he must be the only one that can hear Charlie. Could it be possible that I am now nose to nose with a dog that looks like me, has a name almost the same as mine, and can talk! I MUST be dreaming, Chuck thought. Or I better get stronger glasses AND hearing aids!

The dream he was having suddenly turned into a nightmare as Chuck looked down at his watch and saw he had six minutes to make it to school or it was detention at the end of the day.

Chuck broke away from his daze and started sprinting to school. With that, Charlie grabbed the ball and began a mad dash of his own, trying to catch up to Chuck.

Chapter 6: Show and Tell



First period was about to begin and Chuck still had no idea what he was going to talk about for show-and-tell.

As Chuck anxiously waited for his name to be called, he looked up and saw Charlie peeking into his classroom window. Chuck's mind began to race

and his palms began to sweat as his teacher called the next name on her list, “Chuck Fortunato, please come up and speak about your ‘Show and Tell’ project.” Just as Chuck was about to say he had not prepared his homework, a bark that sounded almost magical broke the silence.

This dog that he had just met saved the day. The next words that were uttered from Chuck’s mouth were, “Today, I would like to talk about my new dog. And he just happens to be peeking through our window right now. I have one of the best and smartest dogs in the world. He can do the most amazing tricks, play baseball, help me clean the house, and even...” he was about to say “talk,” but that might be taking it a bit too far. The bottom line is on this day Charlie had saved the day for him and that was special enough.

For the rest of the day, all Chuck could think about was Charlie. This dog that had suddenly appeared in his life and somehow happened to look a lot like him. Where did he come from? Where does he live? Who are his parents? Surprisingly, many of the same questions he had often asked himself. As the bell rang to end the school day, the most important question Chuck had was, “Would Charlie still be waiting for him outside or would he be gone as quickly as he had appeared?” He took a deep breath and opened the door. Sitting right there on the street corner outside his school was Charlie Fortunato now entertaining all of his classmates.

A big smile instantly appeared on his face and he truly felt that his life was about to get a lot better!

Chapter 7: I Can See Clearly Now



The next morning, Chuck found Charlie waiting for him outside on the front steps of his building. “Hey, buddy, good to see you again,” said Chuck. “Good to see you too, Chuck, although you look a little blurry to me,” said Charlie. Charlie tells Chuck he has always had trouble seeing

clearly and he is not sure why. After some thought, Chuck removed his glasses and put them on Charlie.

Miraculously, Charlie started seeing clearly for the first time in his life. Through his now somewhat blurry vision, Chuck thought Charlie was beginning to look even more like him. Chuck tells Charlie that he will work on finding a way to get him his own pair of glasses. In the meantime, he was happy to share his with Charlie whenever he could.

Charlie would not leave Chuck's side. They walked in perfect unison all the way to school. Everyone they passed said hello and had a big smile. Wow, this is a strange morning. Chuck thought to himself. I have walked these streets to school for a few years now and never saw so many people in such a good mood. Even Mr. Williams, who owned the local fruit stand and was always as crabby as his apples, seemed to suddenly be transformed into a new happy person. Something strange was happening. It was almost magical, and Chuck couldn't quite figure it out, but he suddenly felt REALLY good and if the wagging of Charlie's tail was any indication of happiness, he felt the same way too!

Chapter 8: The Cool Dog in Town



At school, all of the kids couldn't stop talking about Chuck's new dog. Even the "cool kids" that had never spoken to him before wanted to know more about Charlie.

During lunch break Charlie began putting on a show, bouncing the ball off his nose and catching it, rolling over, doing flips, and every other trick you could imagine. Soon, more and more kids gathered in the school courtyard and before long, all the kids at school were cheering for Charlie. Yes, something magical was happening and Chuck was beginning to feel like his life was about to change!

In the days that followed, the pair were inseparable. Charlie's grades were improving, and he was making new friends. This is all too good to be true, Chuck thought. This chance encounter with a dog who happened to look just like him was beginning to turn all his negative thoughts into positive ones. Could this all be a dream or is it really happening?

He couldn't wait to get home and tell his mom about his new friend.

Chapter 9: Guess who's coming to Dinner

“Hey, Mom,” said Chuck. “I met a new friend at school, can I invite him over for dinner tonight?” “Sure, Chuck,” said his mom. “What do you think he likes to eat?” “He’ll eat anything.” “Well, that’s a silly thing to say.” “Not really, Mom, I’m pretty sure he will.”

“What’s his name?” “It’s Charlie Fortuno.” “Really?” his mom says as she scratches her head in disbelief. “That’s a lot like your name ... Fortunato and Fortuno both mean good luck...and Chuck is just a short form of Charlie.” “I know, Mom, that’s not the only amazing thing. He looks a lot like me too.” He has curly red hair, a nose a little too big for his face, and rather large ears and-” “So you mean he’s cute just like you,” his mom interrupts. “I guess so,” Chuck says as he turns red with embarrassment.

Chuck’s mom then asks, “Where does he live?” “Oh yeah, Mom, that’s the other crazy thing. I think Charlie might be homeless, like we have been before. Do you think we could rescue Charlie and he could live with us?” “What do you mean ‘rescue him?’ ” “Oh yeah, I forgot to tell you one... little... thing. Charlie is a dog. Can he be my dog? Can he live with us? Can he be part of our family, Can he?” “Woah, Chuck, one step at a time,” his mom said. “First, let me meet Charlie and we will continue this discussion after that.” “Okay, Mom,” said Chuck. “You can meet him after school tomorrow.”

Chuck thought to himself, maybe the meaning of my name Fortunato is finally coming true!

Chapter 10: Oh Where, Oh where can my little dog be?

The next morning, Chuck ran outside to meet Charlie but he was nowhere in sight. Terror suddenly fell on Chuck. Could this all really have been just a dream, his imagination running wild, as it often did? He figured that Charlie decided to meet him at school today but when he arrived Charlie was still nowhere in sight. For the next seven hours, all Chuck could think about was Charlie. As the school bell rang at the end of the day, Chuck ran outside but once again Charlie was nowhere in sight.

All the way home, he kept calling out Charlie's name, but there was never a response. When he got home, his mom asked Chuck if his new friend would be coming over for dinner. With that, Chuck's eyes began to tear up and his mom became very concerned. His mom asked him what was wrong and he somehow was able to eke out the words. "It looks like Charlie won't be coming over for dinner." His mom tells him, "There's no need to get upset, he can come over another night." Through the sobs, Chuck managed to utter, "No, you don't understand. It's not just that he's not coming over for dinner. I- I- I... I can't find him." "What do you mean you can't find him?" "He appeared out of nowhere and just as suddenly he disappeared." Charlie began rattling off the story of how they met and was speaking as if he couldn't get the words out fast enough. "Yeah, we somehow bumped into each other on my way to school the other day. He saved my show and tell. Everyone I have met since then always smiles at us. The kids in school started talking to me and, and, and... now he's gone." "Are you sure he is homeless?" his mom asked. "Maybe Charlie just got separated from his family. Maybe he was missing and they found him and brought him back home." Chuck wasn't about to tell his mom at that point how he came to find out that Charlie had traveled all the way from the Caribbean by himself to New York in search of his dream to change the world. She would really think that he was crazy and imagining the whole thing if he explained to her that his new best friend ... a dog ... could talk! And TOLD him the story of

his adventure himself! Chuck's mom told him that she would help him try to locate Charlie tomorrow. "Thanks, Mom," said Chuck. In bed that night, Chuck just kept tossing and turning, he couldn't stop thinking about where Charlie might be and what tomorrow might bring. As Chuck was falling asleep he kept repeating to himself, I wish, I wish, I wish... I hope my wish comes true.. I somehow know that the love in our hearts will lead me back to you.

Chapter 11: Charlie is Missing



Chuck woke up on Saturday morning and all he could think about was Charlie. Was he lost? Was he kidnapped? Was he? He couldn't bear to think his last thought.

In the past, Chuck had seen how posters were put up to help find missing people or dogs, so the first thing he needed to do was to make posters that he and his mom could hang around town. He asked his sister if she would help and she gladly joined in the search for Charlie. He said to his mom that he thought they might have better luck if they could put a picture of Charlie on their posters. His mom asked Chuck if he had any pictures of Charlie but Chuck said he never had the chance to take any. "What does he look like?" his mom asked. It didn't take long for Chuck to respond. "Well, Mom, as I mentioned to you yesterday, he looks just like me if I was a dog."

With that, Chuck had an idea. "You know that caricature the street artist drew of me last year? If you just remove my glasses, add some more curly hair to my head and make my nose and ears look a little more like a dog, I think that might work."

His mom could not believe what he was saying but at that point, he was so sad she would try anything that might help find Charlie. His sister Carla is a pretty good artist and volunteered to help create the poster, including her picture of Charlie-Chuck-Fortunato-Fortuno.

They finished making the posters and went down to the local print shop to make some copies and began putting up the signs as they continued their search for Charlie. They went uptown and downtown, crosstown and through every park they knew, but Charlie was nowhere in sight. As the day was winding down, everyone was exhausted, but more than tired; the pain of not finding his new best friend was almost too much to bear for Chuck. He looked at his mom again and as tears began to well up in his eyes, all he could utter to his mom was. "I can't believe my best friend in the world is missing." His mom suddenly had a thought as Chuck muttered the words, "best friend," Chuck's mom said, "I have one more idea. Let's stop by the 'Best Friends Animal Shelter' down on 54th - maybe they might have an idea of how we can find Charlie."

They arrived at Best Friends and Mrs. Johnson the receptionist welcomed them, and we explained the story of our missing dog and showed Mrs. Johnson our drawing of Charlie. She then told us they get lots of dogs into the shelter every day that are found throughout the city. Chuck's stomach

began to churn with excitement as he could barely hear the words coming from Mrs. Johnson's mouth. She was explaining to Chuck, his mom, and his sister that if a dog or cat is found without a tag or identification, they are brought into a shelter and eventually put up for adoption if no family claims him as theirs. She further explained that if their friend was here, it was his lucky day as "Best Friends" animal shelter was a "Adoption Guarantee" shelter. This means that all animals will remain here safely until they are adopted. Mrs. Johnson asked the Fortunato family to wait in front as she took a copy of their poster to the back where the dogs were held to see if she might be able to locate Charlie. There were hundreds of dogs there and the search took a while but she patiently went from pen to pen in search of Charlie and if she located a dog that looked like Charlie, she would snap a picture with her phone to show Chuck's family.

Chapter 12: Where are We?



Mrs. Johnson's camera flash woke Charlie up and he began pacing around his pen, wondering what had happened to him. How could my world get turned upside down so fast?

One day he was happily walking the streets of New York with his new best friend Chuck, and now he's here in this... this dog shelter.

As he looked around, he saw lots of other dogs that appeared to have been there a lot longer than he had, and questions began flying out of Charlie's mouth, hoping to find answers from the other dogs. "Where am I? Will I ever get out of here? Will I ever get to see my best friend Chuck again?"

The other dogs just sat there and had no answers. They looked just as confused as Charlie, all hoping to be back with a loving family as well. "I can't imagine my world without a family," said Charlie.

I sure do hope that Chuck comes to rescue me. I couldn't bear the thought of being without him.

"Hey, guys, when I get out of here, I'm gonna work real hard to try to find you guys a home too. There's a lotta love you can give to lots of families out there. I promise I'll try my best to get you out." "I have a best friend named Chuck and I know he's gonna come to get me and when he does, we will think of a way to get you guys a home.

"Don't get me wrong, I like hanging out with all of you, but I am getting sad without my best friend, Chuck."

Finally, after almost an hour, Mrs. Johnson came back with the news. She thinks she found Charlie. She showed the picture to Chuck and his mom and there on her cell phone was the adorable face of his best friend. They had found Charlie! Apparently, his name tag had fallen off before he was brought into the shelter but it was definitely Charlie.

Mrs. Johnson then asked Mrs. Fortunato for their proof of ownership. As silence fell over the room, all you could hear was the loud gulp from Chuck followed by his mother's response, "We don't have any."

She went on to explain the story of how her son had found Charlie totally by chance a few days before and how they became inseparable, and quite frankly how Charlie had almost magically changed Chuck's life. She told her how her family was once homeless as well and how Chuck had difficulty fitting in. Ever since Chuck and Charlie met, his life had changed

for the better almost immediately. How he, for the first time, looked forward to going to school and how his grades began improving and was making new friends. She went on to say how Charlie had given him the power to be better, almost like this dog had a SuperPower. Mrs. Johnson knew exactly what Mrs. Fortunato was talking about. Chuck respectfully interrupted Mrs. Johnson with, "So, when can we take Charlie home? With the next words out of Mrs. Johnson's mouth, Chuck's whole world suddenly came crashing down. "I'm afraid Chuck, it's not that easy. Since you found Charlie, we first have to make sure Charlie is not another family's dog that may be trying to find him. That usually takes about two to three weeks. After that, we put Charlie up for adoption and anyone that wants to adopt him has to fill out adoption papers which are then reviewed by our staff and board of directors and, if approved, can then make the dog or cat an official member of their family." Chuck found all of this so confusing and didn't really understand why Charlie could not go home with him right now. Chuck's mom explained to him that they had to follow the rules to formally adopt Charlie and couldn't just take him. These rules were put in place so that families that may have lost their pets can get them back without mistakenly going to another family they were already a part of. She further explained that at least they knew where Charlie was and that he was safe. She also said that she would take an application from Mrs. Johnson to begin the adoption process once Charlie had cleared the claimed ownership process.

Chuck understood what his mom was saying but he was still sad, knowing that he had to leave Charlie behind.

Mrs. Fortunato took the application and as they walked out of the waiting room, Chuck turned around one last time and said, "Mrs. Johnson, please tell my best friend that we stopped by... and... I love him, and we will be back shortly and we are working on making him an official part of our family." Mrs. Johnson smiled at them as they walked out and began the LONG walk back home, without Chuck's best friend.

Chapter 13: The World is Not the Same

Chuck barely slept the rest of the weekend. All he could think about was Charlie. He went for a long walk on Sunday to Central Park without Charlie by his side. His whole world had changed. With Charlie, almost everyone would stop and start a conversation with them with big smiles on their faces and now that Charlie was gone, it was almost as if he was invisible. He saw all the families playing with their dogs in the park and everyone was laughing and smiling as they played fetching games with balls or Frisbees and teaching their dogs new tricks. He saw from a distance what he had experienced with Charlie. All the people walking through the park would be in a happy place immediately as they passed each dog. They stopped to say hello and took the time to have a conversation with the families. Seeing all this was almost unbearable. He just HAD to get Charlie back!

When he got home, he went to his computer and began searching for “How to adopt a dog” on Google and it confirmed and further explained what Mrs. Johnson had told them. He read that if you find a stray dog, you should take it to your local shelter so they could begin the search for their family. They would check any tags they may have on, search through missing dog notices given by owners or even use microchips that the owners may have placed on the dog to help identify them. If Charlie was missing from a loving family, he would accept that— although he would be very sad. That family would need to have the love of their life back and they would be just as upset as Chuck that their dog was missing. He had known Charlie only a few days; they would have been together his whole life. But Chuck knew, from what Charlie had told him (although no one would believe him if he tried to explain that Charlie could talk) how he had sailed all the way from the Caribbean to America on a ship in search of his dream to change the world. At this point, he was beginning to question if he had actually heard Charlie speak to him at all.

Step one would be to fill out the adoption papers that Mrs. Johnson at Best Friends had given them. He couldn't wait until his mom got home from

work so he could begin the process. He began to read the application so he would be ready when she arrived. Each question seemed harder than the one before and Chuck was suddenly struck with a terrible fear that he may never be reunited with Charlie, especially when he saw the part that it would cost money to file for the adoption in addition to the expenses needed to take care of Charlie. All he knew was that he would do whatever it took to get him back, including getting a job to help pay for the expenses. He surely didn't expect his mom to pay for this. She even had to start working Sundays to help support her family. As a single mom, she worked as hard as she could for her family even before Charlie arrived in our life.

As the front door opened, Chuck's heart skipped a few beats as he ran into the kitchen to meet his mom and start his quest to get Charlie back.

Chapter 14: Sunday Dinner



“Hi, Mom. How was your day?” “It was good Chuck, how about yours?” asked his mom. “It was okay, but all I could do was think about Charlie.” “I know it’s hard, Chuck, but whatever is meant to be will be. We need to have faith and it will all work out.” “Mom, please let me know when you have

time to fill out the application. I have to get it back to Best Friends as soon as possible.” “Chuck, I need to get settled in and make dinner first and after everything is cleaned up, I promise I will find the time to work on it tonight with you before bed,” said his mom.

“Okay, Mom,” said Chuck, as he helped set the table with his sister. He always looked forward to family dinners, especially on Sunday when he would have extra time to spend with his grandma. Dinner began quietly until Carla asked, “So what’s going on with Charlie?” Chuck explained that they still had to wait a few more weeks to see if anyone claimed Charlie. In the meantime, he was filling out an application so they could be ready to adopt him if he was not already part of another family. The only problem was that an adoption fee of \$300 would also need to be paid.

“I need to find a job, and quickly, so I can have the money in time,” said Chuck. His grandma had an idea that might just work for Chuck to earn money. “You know, Chuck,” his grandma said, “when I go to the park and sit on my favorite bench, I see lots of different dogs being walked everyday by some of the same people. Since you love dogs so much and need to earn money for Charlie’s adoption, maybe you can get a job after school as a dog walker.”

“Oh, Grandma, you’re the best! That’s a great idea! It would be the perfect job.” With that, Chuck’s mood turned around. He became so excited about this idea. He now had a plan to raise the money but he had to figure out how to promote his new company and start working. He started daydreaming about this new job opportunity. He pictured his advertising campaign: “Chuck Fortunato... The World’s Greatest Dog Walker!” He saw himself walking 2,4,6,8, even 10 dogs at a time. Although it would be more like they were walking him if he had that many!

He began to do the math in his head. I need to earn \$300 in 20 days. So let’s see... that would mean I need to make at least \$15 per day. So if I can find three dogs to walk and charge \$5 per walk, I could earn enough money to adopt Charlie.

After dinner, they finished the application and Chuck’s mom said they could drop it off tomorrow after school. She would have a little time before

her second job started. “Sounds like a plan,” Chuck said. His sister Carla said she would continue to help in any way she could. “Thanks sis,” said Chuck. “No problem, Chuck. I am happy to help.” “And thanks Grandma again for your great idea,” Chuck said. “My pleasure,” said Chuck’s grandma. After all, that’s what family is all about and never forget, ‘Home is where the heart is’.”

Chuck couldn’t wait for tomorrow to come.

Chapter 15: The Long Walk



Monday morning was REALLY rough. For the first time in weeks, Chuck was not looking forward to going to school. Mrs. Fortunato had to do everything in her power to get Chuck out the front door.

The only thing that got Chuck looking forward to his day was his mom reminding him that they would be going to Best Friends Animal Shelter after school to deliver their application for Charlie's potential adoption.

As Chuck was passing Mr. Williams at the fruit stand, he stood there motionless for a moment. Mr. Williams tried to put a smile on his face when he asked him, "Orange you going to tell me what's wrong?" Then Mr. Williams asked Chuck, "Where's your friend today?" and all Chuck could do was bow his head as tears welled up in his eyes. He explained to Mr. Williams what had happened to Charlie before he continued on his way to school. Just like his walk to the park the day before everyone he passed just looked straight ahead in a trance-like state, like most of the days before Charlie. All the smiles had disappeared.

When he arrived at school, all his new friends were asking about Charlie. Chuck explained to them that Charlie was in a dog shelter. Most of them had no idea what that was, so Chuck explained to them that Charlie was a stray dog that he had met on his way to school last week. He told them that while he was in school that day, the City Animal Patrol found him alone in the street and brought him into a shelter. He further explained that he now needed to formally adopt him to be an official part of his family. But if Charlie was lost and was already a part of another family, the shelter would return him to his rightful home.

With that, all the kids now began to ask tons of questions. "Are there other dogs in the shelter? Can anyone adopt a dog? What happens to them if they don't get adopted? Will we ever see Charlie again?" All Chuck could say was, "I hope so. We have to," as the morning school bell rang. Chuck had trouble concentrating in school and as each day passed, his grades began to suffer. His mom saw what a difference Charlie had made in his life and assured him that even if Charlie belonged to someone else, she would find a way to adopt another dog to be a part of their family.

This made Chuck feel a little better, but he knew that no one would be claiming Charlie. His main goal now was to raise enough money to adopt him. After school, they would be going to the shelter to drop off the adoption application and it could not come fast enough for Chuck!

Chapter 16: The Shelter

The day had arrived to deliver his adoption papers, but Chuck still had one BIG problem. He could not find any customers to earn the additional money he needed for the adoption fee. The only money he had earned so far was from shining a few pairs of shoes and selling some drinks at his lemonade stand. He desperately needed to find a way to make it work.

At school, all Chuck could focus on was heading down to Best Friends to begin the first step in Charlie's adoption. When the bell rang at the end of the school day, Chuck raced home and waited anxiously for his mom to arrive. As promised, she got out early from work so that they could get to the shelter before it closed. They left their house like a whirlwind and made it to the shelter in time. Mrs. Johnson met them at the door Chuck. Immediately asked, "How's Charlie doing?" Mrs. Johnson told him that Charlie was doing great, making friends with all the other dogs and that no one had claimed Charlie yet. It was the end of that sentence that was the most important part to Chuck.

He had been holding his breath all the way there, thinking the worst. Chuck finally exhaled, releasing all of the anxiety that had built up during their trip there.

Mrs. Fortunato handed over the application to Mrs. Johnson. Mrs. Johnson read it over and she said everything looked good and that she would submit it to the adoption board once the waiting period had ended.

The silence that followed seemed to last forever but finally, Chuck spoke up and explained to Mrs. Johnson about his plan to start a new dog walking business to raise the money for Charlie's adoption but was having difficulty getting it off the ground and he was afraid they wouldn't have the money needed to adopt Charlie. He showed Mrs. Johnson one of his newly printed cards: "Chuck Fortunato, The World's Greatest Dog Walker." Mrs. Johnson said she would try to find a way to help Chuck, but explained to him that she would love to lower the fees but they were needed to help cover some of the shelter's expenses. She explained that it was expensive to keep the

shelter open and in addition to the application fees, the shelter depended on donations from dog lovers and volunteers to help support their organization.

As Mrs. Johnson was speaking, Chuck continued to fight back the tears. His mind wandered as he continued to try to think of a plan to earn the money needed. Just then, a family walked by with their newly adopted dog. This gave Mrs. Johnson an idea. She told Chuck that she thought of a way to possibly help him in his dog-walking business. She explained that many families that adopt dogs from the shelter needed help with their new four-legged family members and his dog walking business might be a big help to some of them and could possibly help him raise the money he needed. She said she would be happy to recommend Chuck's business whenever she could.

As the tears started to dry up, Chuck began to think he might still have a chance to earn the money and help other families at the same time. Chuck thanked Mrs. Johnson and although it was sad leaving Charlie behind, he was now one step closer to getting him back. The adoption papers were filed. Now all he had to do was earn the money and hope no one else claimed Charlie. My dog-walking business just has to work, thought Chuck, as he walked out leaving Charlie behind again.

Chapter 17: The World's Greatest Dog Walker



Chuck woke up feeling excited for the first time since Charlie disappeared. He now had a plan and couldn't wait to get his first job. At breakfast, he

talked to his mom about the conversation they had the day before with Mrs. Johnson at Best Friends. “Mom, do you think anyone will call to hire me?” “We just have to wait and see what happens. Just wait for the phone to ring.”

“And remember, Chuck,” his mom said, “if another family claims Charlie, we can try to adopt another dog.” “I know, Mom,” said Chuck, “but somehow I really feel no one will” ... as long as my conversation with Charlie was real, Chuck said to himself again.

Chuck packed up his backpack and made sure he included his dog walking cards in the front zipper section. On his walk to school, he handed out his card to everyone he had met with Charlie. He explained to them what had happened and why he needed to earn the money. He thought to himself that he had met all of these people only because of Charlie. He would have never gotten a glance if not for him, now he desperately needed their help to get him back. They realized how much Chuck loved Charlie and everyone said they would do whatever they could to spread the word about his business.

A few days passed and no one had called Chuck and felt that he would never be able to earn the money in time. Then on Thursday night, with only two weeks to go before Charlie’s “lost and found” deadline the phone rang and a call came in from a family that was interested in Chuck walking their new dog Honeybear.

Chuck’s mom took the call and the caller explained how they had heard about Chuck’s dog walking business and his wanting to adopt Charlie from The Best Friends Shelter and they would love to hire Chuck to help with their family dog. They explained that anyone with that kind of love for a dog would surely be a great dog walker.

Apparently, a lot of people began to hear about Chuck’s story as well and the dog-walking business began to take off. Chuck began to make a schedule to make sure he could handle all the work.

He began to write down the names of all of the dogs in his book. Honeybear, Jesse, Booboo, Frisky, Miracle, Gary, Tango, and Oakley. On

his wall, he put up a schedule to begin coordinating the walks.

Chuck could be a bit of a scatterbrain when it came to remembering things and sometimes, he would double or triple book and would end up walking five dogs at a time. Sometimes that worked out better as he was earning more money per walk but he still needed to find a way to keep track of all of the dogs.

He suddenly had an idea to help him remember. He wrote down each dog's name on a piece of white removal tape that he placed next to the chart he hung on his bedroom wall. When someone called for an appointment, he would place the tape in the slot to reserve the time slot for that dog. When it came time to walk the dog, he would remove the tape and place it on the leash when he picked up the dog.

He had not only found a way to schedule his walks but also a way to remember the names of every dog while he was walking them. ... even if he had five at a time! As he began walking the dogs, he once again witnessed the amazing joy they brought to everyone he passed. The smiles had suddenly returned and the whole world seemed to brighten with every step he took. The conversations returned, usually starting with. ... What a cute dog... What's his name? Without hesitation, Chuck would rattle off Honeybear, Jesse, Booboo, Frisky, Miracle, Gary, Tango and Oakley. His little nametags were now coming in handy more than he could have ever imagined. Sometimes people he passed would see the name he had written on their collar and say Hi to the dog directly. This started giving him an idea. He realized during those walks that all the dogs he was with were making people happy again as well! He witnessed the power of all pets and vowed from that moment forward, once Charlie was back in his arms, they would work hard to promote the special gift of love that dogs could bring to others. But first, he needed to get Charlie back. He was meeting his goal of earning enough money to pay for the adoption. Two down and one to go. Now he had to hope and pray that no other family claimed Charlie.

Chapter 18: The Longest Day of my Life

It's been three weeks since Charlie had gone to the shelter and as the phone rang this Saturday morning, Chuck saw the name of the caller on his mom's cell phone. ... It read: "Best Friends Animal Shelter."

Chuck started to anxiously pace around his kitchen as he heard his mom say "Oh, okay... I understand... When is the other family coming in?" As she hung up, Chuck couldn't get the words out of his mouth fast enough. "Mom, what did she say? When can we pick Charlie up? I can't wait! How is he?"

The next words out of his mom's mouth became Chuck's worst nightmare. She explained to Chuck that another family had claimed Charlie. Chuck could no longer keep his secret. He told his mom how Charlie had spoken to him and told him that he had been living in the Caribbean and how his family had honored his wish to come to America to live his dream. He explained how Charlie had sailed on a cargo ship all the way from the Caribbean Islands and shortly after it docked in New York 4 weeks ago, they literally bumped into each other on his way to school.

"Woah, wait a minute Chuck. I'm not sure I heard you correctly, are you saying Charlie SPOKE to you?" "Yeah, Mom, it's true. He really did." We will talk about THAT more later." "That's why I am shocked that another family claimed him," Chuck blurted out.

His mom explained to Chuck that the other family had claimed him from the picture of Charlie that was put on the claim notice posted by the shelter but that they did not have the necessary paperwork to confirm their ownership. Mrs. Johnson then explained that both families would need to go in to help them figure out what to do about Charlie's fate. They had arranged to meet with both families the next day and a decision would be made at that time.

Chuck tried to fight back the tears but could not hold them in any longer. “How could this happen?... I can’t be without Charlie. He is my best friend.” “What time are we meeting tomorrow?” His mom explained that they had a meeting set for 10am. Chuck reluctantly replied “Okay,” said goodnight to his family, and went straight to bed. He felt that maybe if he fell asleep, morning would come a lot quicker, but all he could do was toss and turn as he kept thinking about what life without Charlie would be like. They had big plans to change the world together. How could this be happening?

As he dozed off, he dreamed about Charlie leaving the dog shelter with the other family and as their car drove away, he felt the pain of the last time he would ever see Charlie, just before the car turned the corner. His nightmare continued all night long.

Chapter 19: Best Friends – Together Again



As the morning sun peeked its way into Chucks' bedroom, he awoke in a panic as his alarm clock said 8:00. Two hours and counting, he thought to

himself. Two hours and counting!

His mom called him down for breakfast but he could barely eat anything. All he wanted to do was get down to the shelter. At 9:30 they left their apartment and headed down to Best Friends.

The trip seemed to take forever. At 9:50 they walked into the shelter parking lot. Mrs. Johnson greeted them at the door and she explained how they would try to fairly handle Charlie's fate.

Chuck could see another family in the waiting room behind Mrs. Johnson. He thought to himself they must be the other family that was there to claim Charlie. As Mrs. Johnson began explaining to both families how things would be decided, a relentless bark was heard coming from behind the door next to the waiting room. Chuck knew that bark was coming from his very best friend... Charlie Fortunato. Charlie somehow managed to kick open the door and without hesitation, ran straight to Chuck and knocked him to the floor, jumping on his stomach and licking him over and over again.

There wasn't even the slightest glance toward the other family. The other family knew at that moment that this dog was not theirs. They would continue the search for their dog, but that dog needed to be a part of Chuck Fortunato's family.

They had never witnessed such love and bond between a dog and a person before. They wished Chuck well and asked Mrs. Johnson to keep them posted in case they locate another dog that looked like Charlie. With that, Mrs. Johnson approved their application on the spot and explained to Mrs. Fortunato the next steps in the adoption process, all while Charlie and Chuck continued celebrating their reunion. "All we need now is to collect the \$300 adoption fee," said Mrs. Johnson.

His mom called Chuck over and said that the adoption papers were in order and all we needed now was the application fee to be paid. Chuck swallowed hard and pulled out money from both his pockets that he had earned from his dog walking business. He slowly counted the bills that were now very crumpled. He had checked this morning but he hoped his math was correct: 10, 20, 100, 150, 200, 250, 300. 300 dollars! He did it!

He now had everything in place to adopt Charlie. With that, Mrs. Johnson handed over the adoption papers and said to Chuck, “Charlie is now an official member of the Fortunato family.”

Best friends together again. It was now time for them to change the world!

Chapter 20: We CAN Change the World

The power of love, friendship, and purpose began to grow even stronger between Charlie and Chuck. Chuck's grades started improving again and he started hanging out with his new friends that Charlie had introduced him to. His friends asked him why he had stopped talking to them. Chuck explained that he thought they only liked him because of Charlie. They told him that they sure did love Charlie, but Charlie was not the reason they liked him. They thought he looked cool and was really funny. They liked him because of who HE was. Chuck just never had the courage to speak up on his own. Chuck realized for the first time that Charlie did have Superpowers.

This dog he had met by chance (and was now a part of his family) helped him be the person he always was. Charlie taught Chuck that looking different and being different was cool. He was always afraid that the other kids would not like him, so he never tried to make new friends. Charlie had helped to start the conversation, helped him meet new people and had now given Chuck the confidence to know that he always had it in him. He just needed someone (or an amazing dog) to show him the way. He never realized that his new friend Charlie had given him the confidence to be who he always was. All this time, he thought he was rescuing Charlie, but really, it was Charlie rescuing him. With that thought, he looked at Charlie and said, "You know what, Charlie, dogs do have superpowers, and I have an idea about how we CAN make this world a better place by having others experience what we did."

Chapter 21: SuperPaws for a Cause



“You know, Charlie,” Chuck said, “every time we go for a walk, everyone is always smiling and happy when they meet us. We need to find a way to promote pet adoptions so that the people we meet can experience that joy

firsthand while at the same time help save all of the dogs in shelters around the world. They can experience the great joy that a dog can bring to them while giving you guys the loving home you deserve. And they, in turn, can be part of our SuperPaws team and we all can continue to spread the word together.” With that, Chuck had an idea. He looked at Charlie and said, “Remember how you told me your dad had the idea of putting the sign on your leash to help you meet more people? Well, the same thing started happening to me. When I put the names on the collars of the dogs, I walked to help remember their name. It seemed to work the same way. As people saw my ‘name tags’ they began addressing and introducing themselves to each dog by name... Well, Charlie, “I think that day has come for us to try to find a way for all the dogs around the world to join together and maybe we can save the world.” I think we can use that idea your dad had. We can call our company SuperPaws. SUPERPAWS FOR A CAUSE: ‘Unleashing the power of pets to make the world a better place!’ We can create a line of doggie capes and bandana’s personalized with each dog’s name on it. We can start the conversation even faster and together at that moment, use each dog’s ‘Superpower’ to promote our cause. You can be the first one to wear it.”

“It would be my pleasure,” said Charlie. “We can start a doggie movement to spread the word together... around the world.” “A world of doggie evangelists!” We can explain about pet adoptions. and how, as much as these adoptions can help save us, they could actually be helping their lives become even better as well. “Exactly Charlie,” said Chuck. “Like you did with me.” Charlie couldn’t stop jumping up and down.

Charlie was so happy. It was beginning to look as if his trip around the world and finding Chuck WAS his destiny. As Chuck began jumping with Charlie, they felt that nothing could stop them. They had a plan. It was their destiny and maybe, just maybe, they might actually be able to help make the world a better place! “My dog walking business can help us pay for some of the costs,” said Chuck. “I can also earn money to help us like I did back in Santo Domingo earning tips by doing my doggie shows in the park,” said Charlie. “My dad always stressed the importance of hard work to earn money and we can now put that into action to support our cause.”

With his first purchase, Chuck was able to create a website with the help of his sister Carla, named SuperPawsforaCause.com “Hey Charlie,” said Chuck, “we have a lot of work to do so we better get started.” “You know, in order for you to ‘see’ our plan more clearly, I got you a pair of glasses like I promised you when we first met.” With that, Chuck placed a pair of glasses just like his on Charlie. Now they really looked like twins! They both chuckled out loud as they walked the street again to begin promoting their new company, Chuck with a big smile and Charlie with his tail wagging, together on their way to making the world a better place!

Epilogue

It's been one year now and Charlie and Chuck have their new startup company in full swing, and news about it was spreading around the world. They had developed the special doggie bandanas just as they had envisioned. Chuck had these them made for all of the dogs he was walking and saw first hand how the conversations were spreading. Just as they envisioned, passersby were stopping to say hello even more frequently than Charlie and Chuck could have even imagined. Chuck began telling them the story of how he met Charlie. How he rescued him from the shelter. How he had changed his life and their plan to help people experience what they had experienced by adopting dogs around the world or at least making a donation to their local dog shelters to give dogs a better home there before they were adopted. He told everyone he met they could simply go to their website to find out more information about how they could adopt a dog of their own or help out by donating to a local shelter. When out on one of their walks one day, Chuck lost his grip on Charlie's leash and Charlie headed off on his own in a mad sprint down the street. Chuck's heart skipped a beat as his thoughts raced to losing Charlie again. As he ran to get Charlie, he saw him frantically kissing a family in the street with hugs, laughs, and smiles even more than with other people they had met along the way.

As Chuck got closer, he heard Charlie yell out to him, "It's my family from Santo Domingo!" Francesco shook Chuck's hand and explained to him that they heard about Chuck and Charlie's story on the news all the way over in their hometown and their plan to take the trip over to see Charlie again and meet Chuck. Mr. Fortuno told Chuck how he knew it was Charlie's destiny to come to New York, how he felt Charlie was special, how he would someday change the world, and how Charlie's dream was to find a best friend to do it with. Chuck told Mr. Fortuno how he so much wanted to have a best friend, never realizing that would end up being a dog and how they were helping to change the world one "doggie conversation" at a time!



Mr. Fortuno told Chuck that he had friends back home in the advertising and promotions business as well as friends in the TV and newspaper business and they would help them promote their cause and get their doggie bandanas made for them at a great price. “Thank you!,” said Chuck “and so great to meet you and thank you SO MUCH for giving Charlie the opportunity to come to America to follow his dream . I don’t know what my life would be without him.” “You are so very welcome, Chuck, and thank

you for giving Charlie your unconditional love and a great home. This is where Charlie was meant to be,” said Mr. Fortuno. “And maybe it’s my imagination, or am I seeing double? I think you guys are actually related. You two look like identical twins!” With a big laugh and a hug, Chuck and Charlie simultaneously said, “I think we are!”

By the end of the year, news was popping up all over that somehow, as if by a miracle, people around the world seemed to be getting happier and smiling more.

Back in New York, a little boy named Chuck and his best friend Charlie were smiling too as they watched all the reports on TV, somehow knowing that this so-called miracle may just be the SuperPower of pets spreading joy around the world just as they had envisioned!

