

Rusty and Raymond

by Judy Golden



Raymond ran the five blocks down Center Street from school to his home. He could have cut across Stewart Park, but his mother had told him not to. She said the park was dangerous. When he reached his building, Raymond ran the four flights up to his apartment. As he opened the door, he realized something was different.

"Hi, Raymond," his mother said. "How was school?"

"Okay," replied Raymond. "Mom, how come Rusty didn't bark?" Rusty was a big brown mutt who belonged to the Johnsons, Raymond's neighbors.

"The Johnsons moved; they found a better place to live," said his mother.

"Well, I hope it's a better place for Rusty, too," Raymond said sadly.

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"Oh, they didn't take Rusty with them. They can't have dogs in their new apartment," his mother remarked.

Raymond's eyes opened wide and he exclaimed, "Where's Rusty? What did they do with him?"

"Calm down, Raymond. Mr. Johnson let Rusty loose in the park. He'll be okay."

"But how will he find food, and what will he do in the rain?" said Raymond.

"Rusty is a smart dog," his mother said. "He'll know what to do. Besides, there are a lot of stray dogs in the neighborhood. They survive!"

"Mom, if Rusty comes back, can we keep him?"

She knew that keeping a dog was expensive, but she didn't want to disappoint her son. He loved that dog so much.

"We'll see," she said.

Raymond went to his room. He wanted to believe his mother, but he just couldn't. He was frightened for Rusty. He had to find him.

For the next two weeks, Raymond looked down alleyways and in between houses. He saw several stray dogs picking through garbage cans. But none of them was Rusty. The dogs looked thin and scared. Raymond became frightened.

"Is this what's happening to Rusty? Maybe someone found him and gave him a good home," thought Raymond.

"Or maybe he's injured and hiding someplace." Raymond decided to keep searching.

It was getting dark, so Raymond started for home. As he passed Stewart Park, he heard barking and snarling. A pack of dogs was chasing a cat. Some of the dogs were fighting. He couldn't believe his eyes—one of the dogs was Rusty!

Raymond didn't know what to do. He didn't want to disobey his mother, but he had to go into the park to get Rusty. Raymond stood at the edge of the park. He yelled Rusty's name, but the dog didn't hear him. The park was scary, and Raymond didn't want to get too close to those other dogs.

"Rusty, Rusty!" Raymond screamed.

Finally Rusty looked up. He saw Raymond and ran to him. Rusty was thin and had a cut over one eye.

"I'm going to take good care of you," said Raymond, hugging his friend. "This park is no place for either of us. Let's get out of here and go home." ♥

