

# **Very Berry**

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# Chapter One

## Fudge, Mom, Daddy, Dana, Michael, Allie, and Me.

**Y**up. That's me. Berry Anderson.

And "Berry Anderson" were the first words I heard Saturday morning.

You see, the previous night our dog Fudge was whining like crazy because it was getting so warm out, and his little dog bed was getting hot. So, I let him out into the cool spring night air, thinking that in about half an hour he'd come back, refreshed from his walk. I went back up to my bedroom.

And like I said before, the first words I heard on Saturday morning came from two voices. "Berry Anderson! *Berry!*" came from a female voice. My mother. And "Berry? Berry, come down here! Now!" My father. I rushed downstairs to find my parents looking very angry. Fudgie was there too, scratched and bruised. His rich chocolate-brown fur was dirty. His beautiful furry curls were tangled and stained with blood. It looked as though he had been in a fight.

“*Well?*” Mom asked me, putting her arms around Fudge, but stopping because he had started whimpering in pain. She crossed her arms across her chest.

Suddenly it dawned on me. Fudge *had* gotten into a fight. Into a fight with the mean boxer next door.

Cruncher – that was the boxer’s name -- had hated teeny tiny Fudgie ever since we bought him (that would be four years ago). Cruncher barked and growled at Fudge whenever we took him for walks. Cruncher always jumped around and bit people’s hands when he could hear Fudge singing to music we played especially for him to sing to; he simply adored music (a musical dog, right? I know, it was SO cute). So Cruncher had seen his chance and lashed out at Fudge. They had a fight and Fudge lost.

“Okay! I’m so sorry, Mom!” I cried out. “I didn’t know that Fudge would get into a fight with Cruncher. I thought he would take a short walk and cool off, not wrestle! I’m really, really sorry, Fudgie, boy!” I directed the last part to my poor dog. Fudge looked up at me and gave me a sad puppy dog face, that made my heart melt into gloopy stuff. I reached down and stroke him gently. He laid down on the carpet, resting his head on his paws.

“It’s okay, Very Berry,” answered Daddy, not Mom, using everybody’s pet name for me.

The stairs creaked as Dana, my sixth grader sister, and Michael, my second grader brother, raced down.

“I heard noise and it woke me up,” grumbled Dana crankily. Then she saw Fudge and gasped. “What happened to him?” she managed to say.

“Whoa!” said Michael. “Did he get in a fight with a raccoon or something?”

“Worse. He got attacked by Cruncher,” I told them grimly. “But Mom’ll be able to cure his bruises, right, Mom?”

My mom was a doctor. When she worked her name was Dr. Sophia Anderson, which I thought was actually kind of cool.

“Of course,” Mom said, sounding determined.

Daddy scooped up Fudge in his arms and put him in his soft basket, where he instantly fell asleep.

“We’ll give him a bath and put ointment on his bruises and cuts when he wakes up,” Mom continued firmly.

I was so glad that little Fudgie was going to be okay.

We went inside the kitchen to eat some breakfast.

Hmm. I wondered who owned Cruncher. I’d never met the person.

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Sunday flew by really fast and before I knew it, it was Monday again, the start of a new school week. I didn't dislike school like most of the other kids in my grade. Actually, I thought school was pretty awesome, but I wasn't like a geek or anything. My favorite subject in class was Spelling. I thought I was kinda, well, really good at that subject, and I knew that because I had an extra class on it on Tuesday during lunch.

When Dana, Michael and I popped into the car at seven-thirty Dad was all ready for his big meeting that he was going to have after he dropped us off at school.

We got to Newton Elementary and Middle School, and I ran inside the hallway just so I could see my best friend Allison Jenkins. But Lillian Logan saw me first.

Lillian Logan might've been the meanest girl in the fourth grade. Wait a minute. Did I say might? She definitely was. Lillian Logan might've been the meanest girl in the whole elementary part of the school. Again, did I say the word might? More like, Lillian Logan might've been meanest girl in the whole school. Yes, that's more like it.

“So, Very Berry,” she said with a sneer. “I hear your doggie’s been injured.” She made a mockingly sad face. She gave totally bad insults, and that was her reputation in my head. I wanted to box her ears, but I didn’t.

I tossed back my braid and simply replied, “He has. But my mother’s a doctor and she’s already cured his cuts.” I walked away, leaving Lillian looking mystified because I’d never spoken to her before. She’d bully me but I’d just ignore her fiercely.

I quietly walked in to the classroom, where Allie was already waiting for me.

“Seriously. People like Lillian Logan are such a pain in the neck,” I murmured.

“Geez, tell me about it,” and she nodded in Lillian’s direction, where her desk was right next to Allie’s.

Everybody was reading or writing. It’s what we’re supposed to do in the morning when class hasn’t started yet.

“You should go back to your desk,” I said. “I just need to put my homework in the bin. Just go, please. I don’t want you to get in trouble.”

“Oh, all right. Bye, Berry.” She sighed and headed over next to Lillian.

I put my homework in the homework bin and then went to ask my teacher about something.

He said that I could do what I had asked him about.

You're wondering what I asked him. I asked him if I could go upstairs to Mrs. Garren's sixth grade classroom, because it was my sister Dana's twelfth birthday at around eight o'clock, and that was when I was going. And guess what? Yep, you guessed right. He said I could.

So I skipped up the steps and finally arrived at my destination. I flung open the door and started singing "*Happy Birthday*."

Mrs. Garren was talking and looked startled at my gleeful outburst.

"What?" I stopped singing, confused.

"I'm so sorry, Mrs. Garren," I heard Dana say. "That's my sister. I'll be right back."

Dana had a good heart, but could sometimes be as sour as a lemon. Maybe that's what middle school does to you.

"Oh, no, Dana, it is perfectly fine to have her in the room. It is, right, class?" Mrs. Garren soothed, seeing my sister's embarrassed face.

For some reason this made Dana's ears go even redder.

"No, it's fine. I'll take her out," she said, trying to sound cool and collected, but shooting looks of daggers at me.

I really didn't understand. What was going on?



Dana took me out of the classroom and slumped down against the lockers, her hand on her forehead.

“What is the *matter* with you?” she screeched.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“*What do I mean?*” she mimicked. “I’ll tell you what I mean. My birthday is not today, you idiot! It’s tomorrow!” she screamed.

Oh my gosh. I could not believe my ears. How stupid was I?

“Dana, I’m so sorry. I forgot. Really and truly. When Fudgie got into a fight it just scrambled my brains up. I thought *today* was April twenty-third! I guess I just wasn’t even thinking at all.”

“WELL DO THINK!” she roared, and I was frightened. Dana was being very mean.

“Dana, I *am* sorry though,” I said, and gave her a pleading look.

At my pleading look, she finally gave in.

“I’m sorry for yelling. I was just so humiliated. Do me one favor, okay?” she apologized. “Tell the teacher that you are mistaken and that you’re sorry for disturbing her class with an unnecessary interruption. And,” she added, a slow smile appearing on her face, “wish me a happy birthday before school from now on.”

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When it was time for recess Allie came up to me and said, “How did Dana react about your birthday song?”

I guessed the news hadn’t spread around the whole school yet.

And so I plunged into my story. Actually, after it had happened it seemed kind of funny, and I was soon giggling like crazy and I doubled over, struggling for breath. Allie laughed with me, though not as hard as I was.

I thought that this really annoying kid in my class, Teddy Small, was walking right behind me, but it was actually Michael. He tiptoed behind me and shouted “BOO!” right in my ear.

It’s not like I didn’t know that was coming.

“Michael, get away from us. We’re VIPs, you know,” I said, and made a motion for him to bug off.

“Nuh uh, you were scared!” Michael insisted, his green eyes glinting in their evil younger-brother way, but he strutted away anyway.

Allie and I liked to call ourselves VIPs. VIP stands for Very Important People. And we *are* important. We were both not really girly, like all the other fourth grade girls were. And we took pride that we didn’t sob when we broke a nail. We stood up to rude boys who burped in class, when all the

other girls gave them satisfaction and squealed  
“Ewww! That is SO disgusting!” Things like that.

Now that I have explained a little about my  
life, I think we can go on to the next chapter.