

Name: _____

The Best Birthday Present

By Kelly Hashway

"Mom!" Michelle ran into the house. "You won't believe what Anna's grandmother bought for her birthday!"

"What sweetie?" Mom asked, looking up from the bills she was paying.

"A horse!" Michelle smiled. "Can I have one for my birthday? Please!"

Mom looked down at the bills. "Of course not, Honey! Horses are very expensive. Besides, we don't have stables."

"Anna's grandmother is paying to have hers boarded at the stable on Oak Street. We could do that, too."

"Michelle, I don't think you understand how much that costs. Plus, there's food and grooming expenses. I'm sorry but we just can't afford it."

"But—"

Mom held up her hand. "No! It's just not in our budget."

Michelle lowered her head and walked to her room. "This is so unfair." The phone rang, and Michelle answered with a quiet "Hello?"

"So are you getting one for your birthday?" Anna asked. "We can ride them together. It will be so cool."

"No. Mom says I can't have one."

"But why?" Anna asked.

"She said they're too much money."

"Oh. Well, I have to go feed Sir Charles. See you at school tomorrow."

Michelle hung up the phone and flopped on her bed. "Maybe I can help Anna feed Sir Charles," she thought. She picked up the phone, but her mom was already on the line.

"That would be wonderful. I feel so bad, but we just can't afford it. I think she'll really enjoy the riding lessons, though."



Michelle didn't even hear her mom hang up the phone, and she jumped when her mom walked in the room.

"Sweetie, I want to talk to you about something."

Michelle put the phone down. "I didn't mean to eavesdrop. I was going to call Anna."

"So you heard about the riding lessons?" Mom asked.

Michelle nodded.

"I can't afford to buy a horse, but I thought you'd like to learn to ride one. Mrs. Mayberry at the stables on Oak Street gives lessons every Saturday. I just signed you up for five beginner riding lessons. She said you and Anna could be in the same class." Mom's face fell. "I know it's not the same as having your own horse, but—"

"It's better," Michelle said.

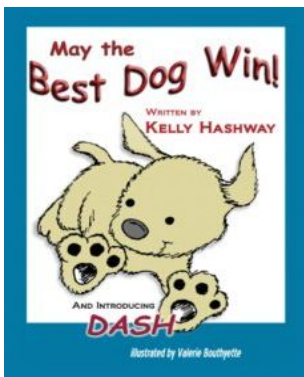
Mom wrinkled her brow. "What do you mean?"

"Anna has to feed Sir Charles and groom him every day. It takes most of the afternoon. I'll just get to ride. That's the fun part."

"So you're not disappointed?"

Michelle hugged her mom. "It's the best birthday present ever."

About the Author



Kelly Hashway's picture book, *May the Best Dog Win*, is now available!

Dash has the perfect life until the Super Sweeper 5000 shows up. Sweeper runs all over the house sucking up the leftover food scraps, and he even gets his own room! But Dash won't give up his place as the favorite dog without a fight.

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1. How did Anna get her horse?
 - a. It was a birthday present from her parents.
 - b. Anna and her family bought it for her.
 - c. Anna's grandmother gave it to her for her birthday.
 - d. She bought it with her own money.

2. When she asked her mother if she could have a horse, Michelle's mother said no. What two reasons did she give?

3. What was the name of Anna's horse? _____

4. Instead of a horse, what did Michelle get for her birthday?

5. What two things does Anna have to do each day to take care of her horse?

6. At one point in the story, Michelle tells her mother, "I didn't mean to eavesdrop." What does the word eavesdrop mean?

- a. to complain in a whining voice
- b. to be jealous of something someone else has
- c. to drop something on the ground and break it
- d. to listen in on someone else's conversation