



Harry Bunking and the Wild Neighborhood Dash

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"Holy Pooper Scooper!" screamed Harry Bunking as he sprinted wildly around the corner onto Waterlilly Lane, his curly hair dripping wet and tears streaking down his dark, caramel-colored cheeks. Right behind him bounded Caesar, a playful black-and-white Great Dane gaining ground with every giant leap. Harry ran faster than an Olympic sprinter, shouting at the empty sidewalk for anyone to get out of his way.



Five hours earlier, the morning had started much more quietly inside the cozy Bunking home. Mrs. Bunking, exhausted after working a grueling twelve-hour shift at the hospital, gently told Harry she needed a nap and that his dad would take him to the community pool later. Harry looked out at the gloomy, overcast sky, convinced it would rain long before his dad ever arrived.



Harry begged and pleaded, flashing his best persuasive smile, but his tired mother steadily made her way upstairs to sleep. Left alone in the quiet house, Harry began moping and pacing impatiently back and forth. Every tiny noise outside sent him dashing to the front door, only to groan in disappointment when his dad was nowhere to be found.



On his eleventh trip to the glass front door, Harry pulled back the shade and spotted his neighbor, Mrs. Ortega, walking down the driveway. She was accompanied by her four kids, all wearing flip-flops, shorts, and carrying colorful pool towels draped over their shoulders. Realizing they were heading to the Avalon Terrace community pool, Harry hatched a bright plan to tag along.



Harry darted straight into the laundry room and frantically searched through the overflowing baskets for his swim trunks. Finding nothing in time, he decided he could not miss his chance and tip-toed toward the exit. He carefully pulled the front door shut without making a sound so he would not disturb his sleeping mother upstairs.



Hiding the house key under a nearby flowerpot, Harry sprinted down the driveway toward the street. He looked both ways and dashed across, eager to catch up with the Ortegas before they reached the neighborhood entrance. Around the bend of Avalon Cove Lane, he spotted the last Ortega child rounding the corner onto Quiet Trace Lane.



Harry tilted his head back and pushed his legs into high gear, desperate to catch up before they went inside. Ahead, Mrs. Ortega and her children turned through the heavy iron gates of the pool complex. Harry dug deep into his remaining energy, running faster than he ever had before.



Little Laurie Ortega looked back, spotted Harry sprinting in their direction, and tugged on her mother's shirt to point him out. Mrs. Ortega, busy signing the visitor log with a pen from her bag, looked up in total shock. There stood a heavy-breathing Harry Bunking, bent over with his hands resting on his knees as he tried to catch his breath.



Before Mrs. Ortega could even ask where his parents were, a sudden bark echoed from down the street as Mr. Wainwright's massive Great Dane slipped out of its yard. Caesar spotted Harry standing near the pool gates and immediately bounded over to join in the energetic afternoon fun.



Realizing his sneaky plan had turned into a chaotic disaster, Harry took off running for home as fast as his legs could carry him. As Caesar chased him playfully down Waterlilly Lane, Harry realized that impatience had brought him a much bigger adventure—and a much bigger mess—than he had ever bargained for.