

## A Hamster's Tale

After SS

*How fascinating!* Dancer thought. *This book says there are libraries where hundreds of books live. It also says the fiction books are in order by author name.*

Dancer scurried off *Your Sixth Year Reader* to look at Jeremy Gentle's bookshelf again. Jeremy was his owner and unknowing educator. Ever since he'd taught himself to read by studying the newspapers lining the bottom of his cage, he'd craved reading.

He hadn't figured out why he started reading. One day he'd noticed patterns in the markings. He saw they repeated themselves in clumps. He saw the clumps formed patterns. He also listened to his owners differently. They also spoke in patterns. "Jeremy" was always called "Jeremy" or "Jeremy Gentle" by the his mother, and sometimes by his father.

Dancer had learned to understand Jeremy and his parents, and then he'd put the terms they spoke with the clumps on the paper. Each letter had a sound, and together they formed clumps his master called "words." The idea was brilliant. No wonder they were his owners and he was only a hamster.

Dancer read each paper eagerly to the point of memorizing it, but reading started to bore him. Jeremy only changed the lining about once a week. So he'd watched Jeremy open and close his cage door. Then he copied the motion, using his paws and nose. He left to search for more words to read.

He found a treasure trove. This bookshelf was one of six in this lower level of the master's big cage. He'd explore upstairs when he finished the books down here. He wasn't even done with this shelf yet.

The books he read so far were Jeremy's old school books, all marked up by Jeremy. Dancer could smell Jeremy's scent on them. He'd learned about books called "fiction," which were stories humans invented. Humans organized fiction by author, not topic, like nonfiction. Now, he'd look for these fiction books.

He scanned the shelf above the school books. Some of the hard backs had names on the binding. Those were the authors. Wells, Yellen, Zach. That was alpha—maybe these were fiction. He climbed to the second shelf and pulled the Zach one—*Zombie Turkeys*—out of its place.

Soon he was engrossed, and he hardly heard the front door open. Jeremy was home! He had to get back in his cage. Using his paws and mouth, he jammed the *Your Sixth Year Reader* and *Zombie Turkeys* back on the shelf and scampered across Jeremy's lab. He shinnied up the table leg to his cage, flipped the sliding door up with his nose, and squeezed in.

Jeremy rolled into the room in his electric wheelchair, with his friend Dan Elanga.

"Hi, Dancer! You're up to greet me! Look, Dan. He's standing up against his door."

"He does look like he's greeting you."

Jeremy picked up Dancer and petted him. Dancer smelled Jeremy's familiar scent. Someday he'd have to tell Jeremy that he'd learned to read. But how?

This Andy Zach seemed to know a lot about animals, at least zombie turkeys. Maybe he'd give Dancer some ideas.

After Jeremy and his parents left the next day, Dancer finished *Zombie Turkeys* and learned about zombie squirrels, rabbits, cows, and people. They were weird, but not any weirder than what he read about people in the newspaper. Humans did all kinds of crazy things. He didn't even know if *Zombie Turkeys* was fiction or not. Or was the newspaper fiction? Nothing was marked. There was so much he didn't know.

Dancer noticed a contact email for Andy Zach in his book. He climbed Jeremy's computer desk. He'd played with the computer once before and found it confusing. Now he had a purpose. Send an email to Andy Zach.

The hamster pushed the mouse with his front paws until the arrow on the screen was over the circle with the three colors, then he clicked it with his nose. A window opened. He had seen Jeremy do this to send an email many times. *Now, what did he have to click next?*

He read everything on that window. Bookmarks, 120 unread, News, My Drive, Blog. *Hmmm... 120 unread what?* He clicked on it.

*Mail. He'd found it! Now, how to write one?* Again he read everything. A rectangle with one word, "Compose." *That meant to write music. Could it mean write an email? Words often had more than one meaning.* He clicked it.

The window changed. It now showed:

From: Jeremy Gentle

To: (blank rectangle)

Subject: (blank rectangle)

Then there was a big blank space. Another rectangle with the word "Send" appeared at the bottom.

Dancer breathed faster, like he was racing on the wheel in his cage. *This is it!* Carefully, he placed his paw on each letter on the keyboard: andyzach@andyzach.net. That was Andy Zach's email address.

He had to push the mouse and click to go to the next rectangle. Subject: "how do i tell my owner i can read?"

That didn't seem quite right, but he couldn't think of any other way to put his question. Andy was an author. He should be good with words.

What should he say to Andy? Just tell him the truth.

andy,

i'm a hamster. i learned to read. how do i tell my owner, jeremy gentle? i can't talk. please help.

dancer

That seemed to cover everything. The letters weren't quite right since he couldn't figure out how to capitalize, but it probably didn't matter. He pressed Send and went to read the rest of Jeremy's bookshelf.

As he spun his wheel that evening, Dancer thought, *How will I know if Andy responds? I suppose the unread emails will go to 121. I'll just have to check in the morning.*

Jeremy and his parents closed the front door the next morning, and Dancer raced out of his cage to the computer desk. Opening the window, Dancer saw 123 unread emails. He scanned them. One subject read, "To Dancer, care of Jeremy Gentle." From Andy Zach. That was for him! He opened the email, twitching his whiskers with eagerness.

Hi Jeremy and Dancer,

If this is Jeremy reading this email, read the attached email and you'll understand. It's from your hamster, Dancer.

If this is Dancer, pay close attention.

Your email fascinated me. Proceeding on the assumption this is not a hoax, here's what I recommend.

First, keep reading and learning about the world of humans. No matter how much you know, it isn't enough. We're weird and dangerous.

Second, you'll have to wait until I finish my *Secret Supers* book tour. Then I'll come to Maryville and personally introduce you to Jeremy and his friends. I'm sure they'll be happy to meet you and be friends.

Third, if you want to keep this secret, delete this email after you read it. Don't send me any more.

Jeremy can read them.

I look forward to meeting you, Dancer!

Your friendly paranormal animal author,

Andy Zach

Where was the Delete button? The hamster moused around the screen, hoping for a pop-up instruction.

He went over a rounded rectangle with lines. "Trash" appeared. He clicked it, and the email deleted.

Whew! Computers puzzled him. But Dancer hoped Andy would know what to do with Jeremy and his parents. He had plenty to learn while he waited. He'd caught up to Jeremy in English. What subjects should he try next?

There was this group of books called "Encyclopedia" on the bottom shelf of one of the bookcases. He'd avoided them because they were so big and heavy. But he'd just learned the meaning of "encyclopedia" in Jeremy's seventh-grade English book. It meant a collection of books that contained all knowledge. That was what he needed.

Too bad he couldn't read an encyclopedia on the computer. He didn't think he could put the big book away. He scanned the screen again for "encyclopedia." Nothing. But what was this blank area with a round symbol? He put the mouse arrow over it and the word "Search" appeared.

Carefully he typed "encyclopedia" in the blank, then clicked the symbol. A new window popped up. "Free encyclopedia online" it read.

"How long do book tours last?" he typed.

He read several articles, with no clear answer. *It seems some questions don't have clear answers.* Some authors never stop touring. Some do it for weeks or months. Too bad he didn't ask Andy how long he'd be on tour.

Under "Popular Topics," he saw, "Abraham Lincoln," a name Dancer recognized from Jeremy's school books. He began reading. He had a lot of learning to do.

\* \* \*

Lincoln was interesting, and his history showed how dangerous humans could be. As a break from the violence, Dancer read about hamsters. There were seventeen types, or species. They lived in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

The world was enormous. What he could see out the windows was the least of it. Dancer felt an urge to explore his neighborhood. How long did he have before Jeremy returned? He glanced at the clock. Twelve thirty. He had four hours.

He'd learned to tell time from Jeremy's first-grade math book. Once he'd gotten past addition and subtraction, he'd been confused, but clocks were a great invention of humans.

Dancer went out the doggy door, followed by Jeremy's black lab, Diesel. He sniffed Dancer curiously and then went about his business.

Dancer explored the backyard and then slipped easily under the gate in the fence. He loved the fresh air and exploring—What was that?

A small striped animal ran up to him. Dancer concentrated and remembered the word for it...chipmunk. It looked like the picture in Jeremy's book. Except this chipmunk had a metal cap on its head. Odd.

After staring at him, the chipmunk ran off as fast as it'd arrived. He'd have to ask Andy Zach about this when he saw him.

Dancer completed his circumnavigation of Jeremy's property and returned through the doggy door. Diesel raised a sleepy head as Dancer entered, and then the dog lay back down. Dancer felt proud, a little like that human Magellan he'd read about. Maybe later he'd have a chance to go around the world with Jeremy.

But now he was tired. He reached for Andy Zach's next book, *My Undead Mother-in-law*, and snuggled up for a good read. The story talked about human zombies and their problems and adventures. Then rats and snakes, monkeys and chipmunks appeared with "metal yarmulkes." What were those?

Back to the computer Dancer jogged. He learned a yarmulke was a small cap worn by observant Jews. Judaism was one of the many religions humans followed. Was Andy writing about Jewish animals?

He'd never thought about religion himself. It was just one of the many things people did that he didn't understand. He trotted back to the book. What did Andy say about these? Was the chipmunk he saw one of them?

Frantically he read more of Andy's book. There it was. The metal yamulkes indicated cyborg-controlled animals. Another online dictionary check taught him a cyborg was a part-human—or animal—part-machine combination. In Andy's book, a criminal controlled the cyborg animals.

*Does that mean some criminal is was using the chipmunk to spy on Jeremy? That'd be terrible!* Now he knew real fear. Humans had always seemed so powerful, but when they turned to evil, they were dreadful. There was only one thing he could do. Back at the computer, he typed:

dear andy,

i found a cyborg chipmunk outside jeremy's house. i'm afraid it's controlled by a criminal. what should i do? please answer quickly.

dancer

He sent it and returned to finish Andy's book before Jeremy returned.

\* \* \*

"Hi, Dancer," Jeremy said as he rolled into his downstairs science lab, where Dancer lived.

Dancer stood up against the cage and waved his paws. Jeremy seemed to like that.

"You've really got waving down. I've never seen a hamster do that before." Jeremy reached into the cage and picked him up.

Dancer wriggled his whiskers as he looked at Jeremy. Jeremy liked that too. If only Dancer could talk.

"Sometimes I think you almost *can* talk," Jeremy said. Then he sighed and put him back in the cage.

Jeremy wheeled over to his computer. Dancer watched him carefully. He opened a window and clicked on his emails.

"So many emails. I think I'll just delete them all," Jeremy murmured to himself. "What's this? Andy Zach wrote to me!" Jeremy read the email aloud.

"Dear Jeremy,

I'll stop by Maryville tomorrow on my book tour. I'll appear in your local bookstore and then at the high school in the evening. Could we get together for supper, with your family?

Call or text me.

Your friendly paranormal animal author,

Andy Zach

"Hey, Mom! Guess what?" Jeremy shouted into the intercom on his desk. He drove to the elevator in their house.

Dancer heard it go upstairs. He wished he could hear what was going on upstairs. Maybe he could. It was risky, but Dancer felt reckless. He shinnied down from his cage and climbed up to Jeremy's desk. Jeremy had installed an intercom between his lab and the kitchen. Dancer turned it on.

"...and so Andy Zach will be here tomorrow and wants to eat with us." Jeremy's voice came out of the speaker.

"To treat him, we should take him to some fancy place to eat," Mrs. Gentle said. "He wrote his book *Secret Supers* about you and your friends."

"Don't you remember when Andy was here in Maryville, writing *Secret Supers*, Denise? He loved your cooking better than any restaurant in town," Jeremy's dad said.

"But what could I make?"

"Just your popovers with roast beef, carrots, and mushrooms. He liked that the best."

"How do you remember what he liked? I mostly remember him asking all these questions about Jeremy and his friends when he was writing about them."

"I remember what *I* like, and he liked the same things I do."

"That makes it easy then. I'll thaw the roast and get it ready for tomorrow evening."

"I'll call him right now!"

*Jeremy seems excited*, Dancer thought.

Dancer returned to his cage and hopped onto his wheel. He needed to think about how to communicate with Andy Zach tomorrow. Dancer thought so hard, he forgot to eat. But he couldn't solve his communication problem. Maybe Andy would have some idea.

\* \* \*

Dancer awoke when he heard Jeremy and his family scurrying around the house upstairs. This wasn't a school day, yet they were up early.

He returned to the intercom and turned it on. He heard rustling and clattering, then—

"I've got breakfast ready. When did Andy say he'd be here?" That was Jeremy's mother's voice.

"Any minute now. It's five to eight," Jeremy said.

"His bookstore appearance is at ten," Jeremy's dad said. "Ah, that might be him."

"Hi, everyone! Jeremy, Bradon, Denise."

*So that's what Andy sounds like.* His voice was a little deeper than Jeremy's dad.

"Thanks so much for having me over, not just for breakfast, but supper tonight."

"It's the least we could do after you wrote your book about Jeremy," Mrs. Gentle said.

"Whatever made you turn their story into a science fiction one, with superpowers and everything?" said Jeremy's dad.

"I thought the story of plucky disabled seventh graders would reach even more kids if they were superheroes. It seems to be working. Sales have been good on the tour."

They settled into breakfast and boring conversation. Then Dancer heard Andy say, "I have an unusual request for you, Jeremy."

"What's that?"

"Could I take your hamster, Dancer, as a good luck charm with me to the bookstore?"

"Uh, of course. Whatever you want, Mr. Zach. I'll make sure the cage has food and water and a fresh newspaper."

"I'll have to leave soon. I want to get to the bookstore by nine to set up."

"Okay, I'll go down now."

"Mind if I go with you? You can introduce us."

"Sure. C'mon."

Dancer turned off the intercom and returned to his cage. He stood against the door and waved as they entered the lab.

"There he is, Mr. Zach. See, he's waving at you!"

"My! How friendly. Mind if I pick him up?"

"No, that'll help me as I get the cage ready."

"He certainly looks like an intelligent hamster."

"Yes, he's been standing and waving at his door to greet me the last week or so."

"Can you think of any reason why?"

"Um, not really. We got him for me. Our dog, Diesel, is really Mom's dog, who trained him. I said I wanted a pet to be my own, and Mom and Dad got me this hamster. He's been good and friendly since I got him. He didn't even mind when I experimented on him."

"That was when you tested your superpowerful magnets on him?"

"Right. I knocked him out twice."

"Those same magnets that gave you and your friends their superpowers, right?"

"Yes. That was really clever of you to tell our story, including our superpowers, yet make everyone think it's fiction. You both told the truth and hid our superpowers."

"Thanks. Did it ever occur to you that your hamster might have gotten a superpower?"

"Uh, no. He's just a hamster. His brain is less sophisticated than a human brain. I wouldn't expect it to react at all the same."

"You're right. I would expect something completely different."

"Like what?"

"Let me show you something." Andy turned on Jeremy's computer. Then he opened a window.

"Dancer, what would you like to say to me and Jeremy?" Andy asked. He placed Dancer next to the keyboard.

Slowly, carefully, Dancer typed:

hi jeremy. hi andy. i learned to read and write. i'm so glad you know now.

Then Dancer turned, wriggled his whiskers, stood up, and waved his paw at them.

Jeremy's mouth hung open like a zombie's. Andy said, "Jeremy, Dancer had previously written two emails to me telling me this. He also told me he saw a cyborg chipmunk around your house, like the kind the arch-criminal Sid Boffin used to spy with, as I told in my book *My Undead Mother-in-law*. I think this room is secure, with all the electromagnetic shielding you've put in it, but I dare not talk about this more in public. The NSA is looking for cyborg animals in Maryville even as we speak. I'll take Dancer with me and let him type on my laptop to tell his story. How's that sound to you, Dancer? Wave if you agree."

Dancer stood and waved as hard as he could. He was finally getting a chance to talk to Jeremy. He'd have to thank Andy too.

"I don't know what to say," Jeremy said. He turned to his hamster. "I'm happy for you, Dancer. I guess you're a member of the Secret Supers now too. We certainly can't let people know you're a genius hamster. But would you like to be our Secret Supers mascot?"

Dancer stood and waved.

\* \* \*

Andy set up his book display at the bookstore Secret Garden of Good Reading. He carefully placed Dancer's cage under the display table, out of sight. He slid the laptop into it, turned it on, and opened the word processor.

"Here you go, Dancer. Tell us everything you can of what you remember and how you learned to read and write. Click on this square to save your work. You could lose all your typing if you don't," Andy said.

Dancer began typing. His heart raced. This was more exciting than the hamster wheel, or even Andy Zach's books. He was writing his story.

He wrote everything he remembered. How he began to understand human speech and writing. He realized for the first time that he had no memories before a certain point. The first thing he remembered was listening to the patterns of human speech and how he heard the same sound from Jeremy each morning. The words fell into place after that. "Dancer," his name, then "Jeremy," and "wheel," and "cage," and all the others.

A little time passed, and then Andy said, "How are you doing, Dancer? Would you like some fresh air?"

Andy carefully removed his laptop and put Dancer's cage on the table.

"Oh, he's so cute!" said a middle-aged lady next to the table.

"I brought him from Jeremy Gentle's house for good luck today, Mrs. Duckworth," Andy said.

"Oh, call me Gladys, Andy. He's certainly been lucky! This has been one of our best author appearances."

"I'm glad, Gladys. I'm always happy to meet fans and to sell books."

"I've brought some sandwiches for us for lunch," Gladys said. She handed him a wrapped bundle.

"Thanks. Mind if I share the lettuce with Dancer?"

"Of course not. We've got to keep our lucky charm happy."

Andy gave him a piece of lettuce. It was a nice break from his usual fare. After lunch, Andy returned the laptop to the cage and Dancer got back to work. He told about meeting the cyborg chipmunk, writing emails, meeting Andy, and going to the bookstore.

He stopped. There were *so many* books to read. He could spend the rest of his life in the bookstore.

That brought him up to now. What should he write next? *That's it. I'll ask all questions.* There were quite a few.

Andy lifted up the table skirt. "Time to go, Dancer. We're done here."

Wait. He thought of one more thing to ask. Quickly he typed, "what's the nsa?" Then he clicked Save.

Taking the laptop, Andy glanced at the last question. "That's a good one. I'll tell you in the car."

Once in the car, Andy put his cage on the passenger seat. "Okay, Dancer. 'NSA' stands for National Security Agency. They're the nation's agency that investigates international communications from terrorists and criminals worldwide. According to the texts I've gotten from them, they've located the cyborg animals' control center. I've got to make a call on my NSA secure phone to talk to them."

Andy took out a red phone and dialed it. "Hi, General Figueroa, what do you have for me?... You've found the control center in West Hampton? Grea... Ah, you're sending in Diane and the Paranormal Privateers? They should be able to take care of it... Oh, there's a house here in Maryville you want *me* to check with the Secret Supers? I'll talk to them... Will do. Bye."

Dancer was a little concerned. The Secret Supers included his owner, Jeremy. He didn't want him tangling with any criminals.

"Hmmm, Dancer. I'd better call Jeremy's friend Kayla Verdera. She can communicate to them all using telepathy. We need the Secret Supers help right away." Glancing at him, Andy frowned. "I'd swear you look worried. Here, type out your concerns while I call." Andy put his laptop into Dancer's cage.

Dancer was glad to tell someone about his concerns. While he typed, he listened to Andy's call.

"Hi, Kayla, this is Andy Zach. You can broadcast to me... This is an emergency. Can the Secret Supers meet me at Redwing street here in Maryville?... That's great. See you in five minutes. Wear your uniforms. This is an undercover operation. Thanks. Bye."

"Okay, Dancer, let's see what you think of all this." Andy took the laptop back.

"why does jeremy have to be involved in catching criminals?" Andy read.

"Jeremy and his friends are actually very good at catching criminals using their powers. Haven't you read *Secret Supers* yet?"

Dancer shook his head no.

"Jeremy has telekinesis, Dan can read minds, Kayla can broadcast thoughts and sensory sensations, and Aubrey has super strength. They have more trouble with school than criminals."

"will jeremy and his friends be in danger?" Ancy continued reading.

"No, I don't think so. They aren't expecting us, and we can use Dan to scout them out. The NSA thinks it's only one or two people here running the cyborg animals in town out of this house on Redbird street. And here we are. And here come the Secret Supers."

Andy picked up Dancer and put him on his shoulder. Down the street flew a bright-red flying car with a bubble top. Jeremy drove, and he had a small girl with dark hair next to him. Dancer recognized her: Kayla Verdera. In the back were two big kids. One was Jeremy's best friend, Dan Elanga. He had a round, dark face and black hair, and dark glasses because he was blind. The other Dancer knew as Aubrey Wilcosky. He couldn't forget the six-foot-tall girl with two prosthetic legs.

Aubrey jumped out of the car first, bouncing on the strong springs of her artificial legs. "Hi, Mr. Zach. It's been a long time since we've been on a mission. Where's the gang you want us to get?"

"Aubrey, they're down the street a ways. Mr. Zach wants me to listen in on them and scout them out," Dan said as he got out.

Jeremy and Kayla floated out of the front seat and then walked to them. Jeremy used telekinesis to help him and Kayla walk when fighting crime. Kayla usually used a walker. She had bad balance and couldn't talk.

Dancer had seen Jeremy float around the lab using his telekinesis, but not in public before. Then the hamster noticed the four seventh graders had red uniforms with "SS" on them and black masks. He supposed this would fool most humans, but he could tell who they were by smell.

"Okay, Dan, the address is 323 Redwing, four houses down on this side of the street. What can you tell us about the people inside?" Andy asked.

"Hmmm. There only seems to be one, and he is... watching us! He's got a TV monitor, and the camera is in the grass, not too far away!"

"I wonder if that's the chipmunk Dancer saw, spying on us now?" Andy said.

Hearing the word "chipmunk," Dancer stood up on Andy's shoulder and waved.

Jeremy laughed. "Dancer thinks so."

"Can Dancer tackle the chipmunk, and then we can attack the house?" Aubrey asked.

"Dan, what defenses does the house have? Can you tell?" Andy asked.

"He's pretty confident. He's waiting for us to attack. Oh no! He's got cyborg black mambas over the doors! And rats. And a monkey. And a gorilla!"

"Rats," Andy said. "That's pretty much how Sid Boffin fought the Paranormal Privateers. We may have to wait for them to come here."

"I think we can take them," Aubrey said. "Kayla can blind the guy, and then he can't direct his cyborgs."

*Right. I just project darkness, like Dan sees, into his brain,* Kayla thoughtcast.

"Only I can now see, using other people's eyes when I read their minds," Dan said.

"What if we don't go in the doors, where they expect? What if we go through an open window?" Jeremy said.

"I suppose you can fly through it," Andy said. "And surprise is your best tactic. Okay, let's give it a try. Aubrey and Jeremy can lead the assault through the window. Dan will read your minds, and Kayla will give everyone an update on what's happening. But first, Dancer, can you go and grab the chipmunk? That'll surprise the controller. Then Kayla can blind him. He won't know you're going through the window." Andy put Dancer on the grass. "Can you do your part, Dancer?"

Dancer stood, nodded, and waved his paw. He felt excited to be part of the team.

"Let's do it!" Aubrey said.

"Everyone huddle up around Dancer," Andy said. "Dancer, you slip off through the grass and find the chipmunk."

Dancer scurried off.

"I'm watching him," Aubrey said. "He's making a beeline for the yard next door. Or is that a hamster line? Ooo! He's tussling with the chipmunk! He's got him pinned. Strike the controller blind, Kayla!"

*Done!*

"Oh, he's panicking now," Dan said. "He's punching controls and trying to do things blindly. He's dropped the mambas by the doors, front and back. The rats are also prowling there."

"Let's go, Jeremy," Aubrey said.

Like a middle school Superman and Superwoman, Jeremy and Aubrey flew to an open side window. The screen popped off, thanks to Jeremy's telekinesis, and he flew in, then Aubrey.

"They came in the bathroom," Dan said. "Tell them to go to the basement, Kayla. But that's where the gorilla is! Jeremy is putting the rats and the mambas into the freezer upstairs."

"Will they be able to handle the gorilla?" Andy asked.

"Jeremy thinks so. His telekinesis can lift over a thousand pounds. And so can Aubrey," Dan said.

"Tell them the gorilla probably is confused without directions from the controller," Andy said.

*I'm relaying all of this to them,* thoughtcast Kayla.

"The blind controller is just pushing one button over and over. It's the gorilla's attack signal!" Dan said.

"Hey, where's Dancer?" Andy asked.

*I saw him slip into the house through the cat door,* thought Kayla.

"They're downstairs," Dan said. "The door to the control room is locked. Aubrey kicked it open. And the gorilla attacked! Aubrey slugged it, but it didn't slow him down. Jeremy has it pinned on the floor, but he

can't hold it. It's slowly moving toward them, like a zombie. They're dodging, but the gorilla's not stopping, and they're not giving up. It's an impasse. They can't get past the gorilla."

"Oh no! Jeremy's getting tired. The gorilla's moving faster. Wait. What's that? Dancer is there! The gorilla doesn't notice him. Jeremy just yelled to Dancer to chew through the power cord to the computer. Dancer stood and waved and went inside."

"Kayla, can't you blind the gorilla?" Dan asked.

*No. My telepathy doesn't work on animals.*

"Nor does mine," Dan said. "I can't read Dancer's mind. Oh, now the gorilla has slumped down. Jeremy and Aubrey have gotten in. Aubrey's tying up the controller. Poor Dancer. He chewed through the computer's power cord, and he's lying on the carpet. Jeremy's doing CPR, with his telekinesis. He's really frightened. He wants us in there. I'm going in!"

Dan, Andy, and Kayla rushed into the house, raced down the steps, and found Jeremy and Aubrey huddled over Dancer. Jeremy was crying.

"Is he all right?" Andy asked.

"I-I-I-don't know," Jeremy said.

Lying on his back, Dancer opened his eyes, waved his paw, and closed them again.