“I wonder what Mom would say if she saw our paws this dirty,” I teased.

“I’m not sure,” Chloe answered, “but I bet she’ll make us take a bath the minute we get home.

“I’m just glad Mr. Dawson didn’t fire us,” I commented, remembering the conversation from the day before. When I saw him on the porch with Mom and Dad, I was sure we had been axed. Thankfully, Mr. Dawson listened as we explained what happened.

“Everyone makes mistakes. Yes, you should have been clear on the instructions before you started, but I like how you handled things. Once you realized you made a mistake, you went to great lengths to correct things on your own. That’s a wonderful quality to have. It shows you have a strong work ethic and you have initiative,” Mr. Dawson explained. Once he realized we’d spent our own money to purchase newspapers, he said we could work a few extra hours each day doing odd jobs and he would reimburse us for what we spent.

For the past hour, Chloe and I had been in the circulation department helping Pete, another employee, put today’s newspapers in plastic bags. It was raining cats and dogs outside. The plastic would keep the newspapers dry. Unfortunately, Chloe and I were going to be wet dogs once we started our delivery route.

“I’d be surprised if you got fired. Mr. D.’s pretty cool,” Pete commented. “But make sure you read the paper every day.

He’ll quiz you on it. Sometimes he’ll ask you about the different parts of the paper, other times he will ask about a story. Nothing’s off limits.” Chloe and I looked at each other with big eyes.

“But we’re not adults. Why would we read the paper?” I asked.

“Whatever you do, don’t let the boss hear you say that! You don’t have to be an adult to read the paper, Woody,” Pete replied. “If you don’t read the paper, how can you keep up with the scores of your favorite teams, learn about events in your community, see what’s coming on TV, check the forecast, read the comics, or search the classifieds? At the very least, you should know the parts of the paper.”

Pete grabbed a newspaper from the stack, but instead of putting it in plastic, he unfolded it. “Test question number one - point to the ear,” Pete instructed. Chloe and I looked at the paper and looked at each other. I took a stab in the dark and pointed to the bottom of the page. “Fail!” Pete announced, smiling. “Crash course, so pay attention. See the name of the newspaper at the top? That’s called the flag. Underneath is the masthead. It lists the date, volume and edition. See the title over every article or column? That’s called a headline.

Underneath the headline of the article it says “by” and gives the author’s name. That’s the byline. You following me so far?”

Chloe and I nodded yes, so Pete continued.

“See how this article says, ‘Chicago, Illinois’ underneath? That’s the dateline. It used to have a date with the town. Now, most of the time the dateline just lists the town. At the bottom of the same article it says, ‘Jump to page 3.’ That’s called a jump line. Pictures are called cuts and the information under the picture is called a cutline. And the ear is either top corner of the newspaper. Any questions?”

Chloe and I nodded no.

“Final piece of information,” Pete announced. “Each paper is different, but our newspaper has three sections. Section A is the local news, national news, editorials, and obituaries. Section B is sports and entertainment – including the comics. Section C is Classifieds. Now, if you’ll just memorize everything I’ve told you, plus scan through the newspaper articles every day, you’ll be in good shape.”

“Thanks for the lesson,” I replied. “As soon as our route is finished, Chloe and I will read the paper.”

“Let’s not take a chance on you failing your first test from Mr. D.,” Pete said. “I’ll finish stuffing the papers into plastic while you two look over the paper.”

“Governor Signs Tax Bill
Local High School Gets New Principal
Good Samaritan Rescues Cat from Tree
Main Street Welcomes New Business
Bicycle Thief in South Forest Neighborhood
Mayor Asks City Council for …

“Wait a second,” Chloe interrupted. “What did that headline say?”

“Mayor Asks City…”

“Not that one,” Chloe interrupted again. “Read the headline you read before the one about the mayor.”

“Bicycle Thief in South Forest Neighbor…,” I stopped in the middle of the word and looked at Chloe “Could it be?”

“I don’t know,” Chloe answered, “but we need to call the police.”