

The Long Walk to School

by Elizabeth Trach

"Eric, are you ready to go yet?" Doug asked. "I can't wait to get to school!"

Eric put on his backpack. He was not happy. On all the other school days, Mom walked with him and Doug. She held his hand to cross the street. She also kept an eye on Rufus, the big dog around the corner. Eric felt safe walking to school with Mom.

"Boys, don't forget to look both ways before you cross the alley. Be safe, and have fun!"

Eric and Doug walked down the front steps and turned right. The sun was shining.

When the brothers reached the small alley, they stopped. Doug looked right, but Eric looked left. "Look left first, then right, the left again," Eric reminded Doug.

There were no cars, so the boys crossed the street. In the distance they could see a tall man with a bright yellow vest. That was Mr. Allen, the crossing guard. He held a little red stop sign to make the cars wait while children crossed the busy street. Soon the boys reached the corner.

"Good morning!" said Mr. Allen cheerfully. "It's a great day!"

Eric and Doug crossed the street. The boys turned right and began the hard part of the walk up the big hill.

"My backpack is so heavy!" said Doug. He was breathing harder as he climbed the steep hill.

Eric was also tired, but he knew that the worst part of the walk was at the top of the hill. That's where Rufus lived. Rufus was a big black dog with pointy ears. He always ran right up to the fence and barked loudly as the boys walked past. Mom always walked next to the fence so that Eric didn't have to look at Rufus between the fence posts. That made him feel safe.

Doug kept walking, but Eric stopped when he reached the fence post. He took a deep breath. Just as he took his first step, Rufus ran out from behind a tree and barked.

Eric ran. He passed Doug and didn't stop running until he was past the white fence.

Doug caught up with Eric. "Wow! You really ran fast! Rufus could never catch you, even if there wasn't a fence."

Eric smiled and felt very proud. The boys turned left to enter the school playground. They played tag with their friends before the teacher called them inside.

Questions

1. How are Eric and Doug related to each other?
2. Why is Eric unhappy about walking to school without Mom?
3. Who do the boys first meet on their walk?
4. How do you think Eric will feel the next time he walks past Rufus?