

# Furry Tails:

The Adventures of Cinnamon Persimmon

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# Chapter 1

## A Birthday Gift

“Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday, dear Paige! Happy birthday to you!” Family and friends at the birthday party sang out because this was a special day. Cliff and Clarissa Atkins decided to have a party for their daughter who was turning sixteen. It wasn’t a big party, but all of Paige’s best friends were there at the house celebrating. “Blow out the candles, but make a wish first!” Brenlee said excitedly. Brenlee, Paige’s older sister, was just the opposite of Paige in every way. Brenlee had red hair and freckles like her mother and wanted to be a nurse. Paige looked more like her dad with light-brown hair and green eyes. Even though they looked and acted different, the sisters were close.

Before blowing out the candles, Paige looked around the dining room table where her family and friends sat with colorful presents waiting to be opened. Paige knew exactly what she wanted for her birthday. But not one wrapped gift sitting on the table was shaped like the item that she secretly longed for. *I should be thankful for the party, Paige thought. Mom and Dad worked hard to hang the decorations and make the delicious food. My friends, April and Becky, skipped a day of skating to be here.* As Paige closed her eyes, she still couldn’t help wishing for that special gift her heart wanted so badly.

Everyone clapped as Paige blew out all the candles decorating the cherry-flavored cake—Paige’s favorite.

“I suppose it’s time to open the presents now before we eat the cake and ice cream,” Clarissa Atkins suggested.

Suddenly, the doorbell rang.

“Who could that be?” Paige questioned.

“I’ll go see who it is.” Cliff rose from the chair and left the table to answer the front door.

Everyone but Paige knew who had rung the bell. This visitor was expected.

After a few minutes, Cliff returned. “That was Mrs. Green. She wants to wish Paige a happy birthday, and she came to drop off a gift that your mother and I got for you.”

“Did she leave, Dad?”

“No. She’s waiting in the living room with your present,” Cliff replied as Paige started to get out of her chair, excited about the surprise. “Wait here. Your mother and I will bring Mrs. Green and the gift in.”

Paige could hardly sit still. *What was this surprise? Why was Mrs. Green here to deliver it?*

At that moment, Mrs. Green walked in to the dining room smiling. “Hello, Paige. Happy birthday, dearie.” Mrs. Green attended church with the Atkins. Her silver-colored hair was piled on top of her head in the shape of a beehive. Paige suspected Mrs. Green used a lot of hair spray to fix her hair the way she did. As she gave Paige a hug, the smell of her perfume caused Paige’s eyes to water. She was a nice lady and liked to call everyone dearie.

“Hi, Mrs. Green. Thank you for coming. Would you like some cake and ice cream?” the sixteen-year-old asked, not forgetting her manners.

“Thank you. Maybe later. Right now your parents have a surprise for you.”

*Oh, yeah! The surprise.*

At that time Cliff and Clarissa entered the dining room holding that special gift Paige had wished for.

“A poodle!” Paige shrieked out loudly. She couldn’t take her eyes off the precious little creature that was looking directly at her.

“Happy birthday, sweetheart.” Cliff and Clarissa placed the tiny poodle in their daughter’s arms. All eyes were on the poodle that had just made her entrance. Everybody wanted to touch the small dog, but they didn’t want to scare her.

“Oh, she’s just a little ball of fur!” Becky exclaimed.

Paige studied the poodle carefully. Becky was right—her birthday gift was a tiny ball of strawberry-blonde-colored fur.

“I weighed her before leaving the house,” Mrs. Green said. “She weighs exactly one pound. That’s about right for a poodle who is six weeks old. She’ll probably end up weighing close to ten pounds since she is a toy poodle.”

“When was she born, Mrs. Green?” Paige wondered.

“Dearie, this angel was born the first day of March.”

“Her fur color is a mix between red and blonde. She’s almost the color of the cinnamon sticks that Mom puts around the house to make it smell good at Christmas. She is so beautiful.”

“This particular toy poodle is an apricot color,” Mrs. Green shared with everyone. “Poodles come in different colors, but I think the apricots and reds are the most interesting. You just don’t see those every day.”

Paige snapped her fingers. “I know what I’m going to name my poodle—Cinnamon.” Paige gently lifted Cinnamon up, looking into her brown eyes. Cinnamon looked back at Paige wondering who this non-furry creature was and who all the other non-furry creatures at the table were. They didn’t look a thing like her furry friends at Mrs. Green’s house where she had been born. “Hi, Cinnamon. You are so pretty. I love you and am going to take very good care of you.”

Everyone liked Cinnamon’s name. “I think she should have a middle name like the rest of us since she’s a member of the family,” Brenlee said.

Silence filled the dining room. Everybody was busy thinking about what middle name the toy poodle should have. Clarissa glanced out the window. The tree in the back yard was blooming. The fruit on it was ripe this time of year in April. “I have an idea for a middle name.” All eyes turned to Paige’s mother with interest. “Look out the window. Do you see the tree in the back yard growing its fruit?” Everyone sitting around the table stared at the tree.

“Yes. It’s a persimmon tree. Sometimes the persimmon looks pink and other times it looks orange because of the way the sun shines on it,” Cliff said.

“I think her middle name should be Persimmon,” Clarissa offered.

“Cinnamon Persimmon. Wow! That sounds really cool.” Paige smiled, showing her braces.

“I’ve never heard that name for a pet before,” April shared. “I like it.”

“She’s more than just a pet.” Once again Paige lifted the poodle to where she could look her in the eyes. Cinnamon’s wet black nose lightly touched Paige’s nose.

“Hello, Cinnamon Persimmon. Welcome to the family! I’m your mommy.”

Cinnamon liked the sound of her mommy’s voice. Cinnamon Persimmon felt safe in her arms. Paige placed Cinnamon back on her lap. The poodle curled into a ball.

“Why don’t you open your other presents?” Cliff asked.

“My birthday wish came true! I’m content to have Cinnamon.”

“Well, I think you will want to open these gifts,” Clarissa urged.

Paige picked out a package wrapped in blue paper. Cinnamon perked up at the sound of the gift being opened. She tilted her head, staring as Paige opened it. The present was a green food bowl. Cinnamon sniffed at it.

“That’s from me. Your parents suggested I get a bowl for Cinnamon. I liked this one because it holds both food and water. It’s made for small animals,” April said.

“Thank you for this gift. You knew I was getting a poodle?”

April grinned, showing her dimples. Paige looked at her sister and then at Becky. The nodding of their heads told that they had known about this special birthday surprise.

“Open mine.” Becky handed Paige a bag that read HAPPY BIRTHDAY! on it in big letters.

Paige pulled from the bag different kinds of toys. One was a strawberry with a smiley face on it. It squeaked when Paige squeezed it. Cinnamon’s ears perked up at the sound. Paige held it to the poodle’s nose to sniff it. Cinnamon wasn’t sure what to make of this thing. It didn’t move or make a noise unless her mommy played with it. Cinnamon pressed her nose to the strawberry—very gently at first. It was soft and easy to press.

The poodle nudged the toy harder. SQUEAK! Cinnamon jumped in Paige's lap. She eyed the strawberry with suspicion. Everybody at the table laughed.

"Let's see your other toys, Cinnamon. You got a ball to chase and a yellow tennis shoe that also squeaks. Thank you, Becky. Cinnamon will have fun with her toys."

"Here, dearie. Happy birthday." Mrs. Green handed Paige a perfectly wrapped present with a bow on top.

As Paige opened the gift, she suspected it would be for Cinnamon. "A mirror?"

"That's for Cinnamon to see herself."

"What an unusual idea."

"The mirror might help Cinnamon become more independent as she grows. I've used one with my poodles before. You want to encourage Cinnamon Persimmon to have a sense of who she is—an identity. I suggest you place it on the floor so she can look right at it," Mrs. Green said.

"Should I hold it up to her now to see herself?"

"No. I would wait for Cinnamon Persimmon to look at it by herself. She'll explore her surroundings very soon."

"I appreciate the gift, Mrs. Green. You know a lot about poodles. I want what is best for my little girl."

"I've already given your parents advice about the kind of food Cinnamon should eat. Poodles have very sensitive stomachs. They cannot eat what humans eat, or it will make them sick. Toy poodles have small tummies. They do not need to eat a lot. I brought some food over for Cinnamon until you can go to the pet store."

“I definitely want to take care of Cinnamon as much as I can. I will follow your directions carefully about feeding her.”

Brenlee walked over to her sister and handed her a big box. “I’ve been waiting patiently for you to open this. May I hold Cinnamon while you unwrap it?”

“Sure.”

The older sister picked the poodle up and closely hugged her. She could feel the poodle’s heart beat. “You are so adorable. Life is going to be different around here now that we have a puppy.”

Paige pulled out of the box a round bed. Decorated in a light-green color, the bed was soft and plush. “This is just the right size for a toy poodle. Hey, it even matches Cinnamon’s food bowl! Thanks, Sis.”

“You’re welcome. Cinnamon needs to have her own private space. This is called a sleeper. April and I went shopping together one day and thought it would be neat if the bed and bowl matched. After all, Cinnamon is a poodle.”

Paige picked up another present. “Who’s this from?”

“That’s from Troy. He’s sorry he couldn’t be here. Troy said he can’t wait to see Cinnamon when he visits in a couple of weeks.” Troy and Brenlee are to be married in a year, after she finishes nursing school. He lives two hours from the Atkins family and visits often.

“This is heavy. What on earth is it?” Paige unwrapped the gift. The box read that inside it was a puppy pen. “A pen? What am I going to do with this? Please don’t tell me Cinnamon goes in here!”

Cliff Atkins said gently, “Your mother and I are at work during the day. You and Brenlee are in school. We need a place to put Cinnamon until she becomes potty trained. I promise that after she is trained, we will no longer need the pen. The drugstore closes an hour for lunch. So, I can come home at lunch to let her out to play and potty. She won’t be in it all day.”

“Where did you plan on putting the pen?” Paige still didn’t feel good about using the pen.

Cliff thought carefully, “The kitchen. It’s a busy place. Cinnamon will have a view of all that goes on in there. We can set the pen up against the wall. It’s big enough to where she can play and have her sleeper. Don’t get mad at Troy for buying that. We told him to get a pen.”

“You promise me the pen can come down after she is potty trained?”

“I do,” Cliff agreed.

Paige felt a little better, but not much. She was doubtful about having the pen in the first place. But she didn’t say anything else about it to her dad.

“Here’s one more present, Paige. It’s from your dad and I.” Clarissa handed Paige a small gift.

“You didn’t have to buy me anything else. Getting Cinnamon for me and having this party is enough.” Paige shook the present. It made a ringing noise. She opened the gift. It was a bell. The reason for getting the bell stumped Paige more than getting a mirror from Mrs. Green. The puzzled look on Paige’s face caused her mother to explain the gift.

“This lady at work told me they potty trained their poodle using a bell. Your dad will hang the bell by the kitchen door where Cinnamon can reach it. When she needs to go outside to potty, she can ring the bell to let us know. This will help potty train Cinnamon faster. When Cinnamon learns to use the bell, she can move out of the pen sooner.”

“That is fascinating. Poodles are very smart. How do you plan on getting Cinnamon Persimmon to ring the bell?” Mrs. Green just loved saying the poodle’s name.

“Your dad is going to put the bell up today. Every time one of us takes Cinnamon outside, we need to ring the bell with her paw. As we ring the bell with her paw, we say it’s time to go outside. Then we take her outside. After she potties, we tell her what a good girl she is and give her a doggie treat as a reward. She will connect the bell and doggie treat with going outside to tinkle.”

“Do you think it will work, Mom?”

“I really do. As Mrs. Green said, poodles are highly intelligent animals. My friend at work says it took her poodle no time at all to learn to ring the bell. I think it’s worth a try. We just have to make sure we use the bell every time we take Cinnamon out. Since she’s a puppy, we need to take her out about every hour. As she gets bigger, we won’t have to take her out so much.”

“I will put the bell up after the party is over,” Cliff said. “For now, why don’t we have some cake and ice cream?”

“That sounds good. I can’t wait to taste the cherry cake that Mom made.” Paige looked around the table at her family and friends. “Thank you, everyone, for the best

birthday ever. You all can hold Cinnamon if you want to after we eat. I'm so blessed to have you all and Cinnamon in my life."

"Happy birthday, Paige!" everyone said at the same time.

All this talk about bells and toys and pens among the non-furry creatures made Cinnamon Persimmon wonder. *My life is taking a different path now. I no longer live with the lady with the funny-looking hair and the other poodles. It looks like I have a new home, especially with the one who calls herself Mommy. They seem nice. I wonder what the future has in store for me? I do like my name—Cinnamon Persimmon. That's a name any girl poodle would be proud to have!*

All of a sudden the toy poodle felt very sleepy. She curled up into a little ball on her mommy's lap and went fast to sleep.