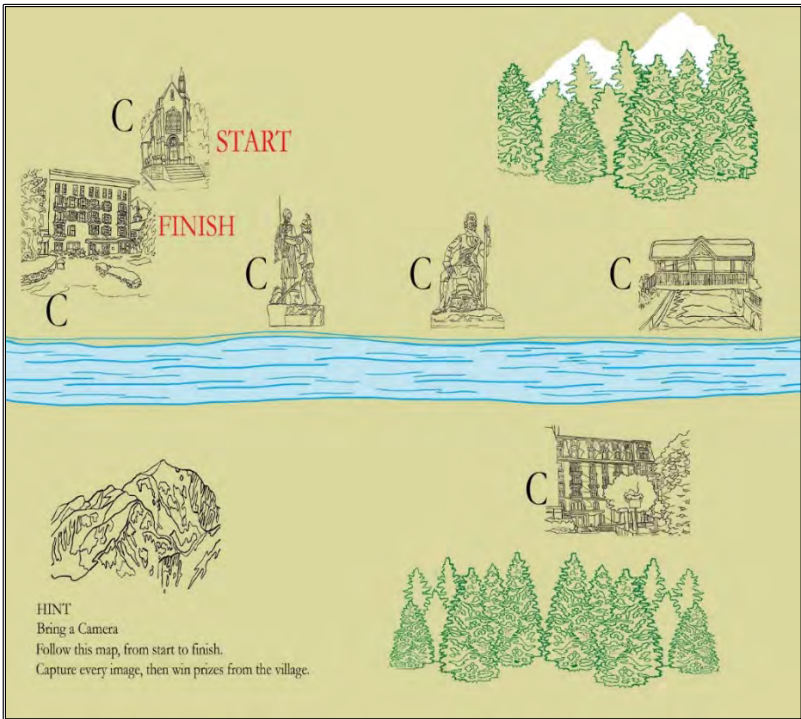


MAX and VOLTAIRE

Treasure in the Snow



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The Max and Voltaire Series™ Book Four

CHAPTER ONE

HELLO AGAIN

Madame Rosemarie is having a cup of coffee with her neighbor, *Madame* Sweet. They are sitting in a small dining area that opens into *Madame* Rosemarie's living room. The dining area and living room are filled with lovely objects from around the world -- some small stools from Africa, wall hangings from China and pottery from England and France. *Madame* Rosemarie is an interpreter and has traveled to many countries. She is an avid reader. A floor-to-ceiling bookcase takes up one entire wall of her living room.

Madame Rosemarie's dog, Voltaire, and her four cats – Max, Zoa, Tish, and Say What – are sitting near the fireplace in the living room. Voltaire is a medium sized dog with white curly fur. Max is a large heavysset cat with brown and beige coloring. Zoa, the only female in the group, is svelte and



has white fur. Tish is a bit of a roly-poly, male black cat, with white patches on his forehead, chest, and at the tip of his tail. Say What's coloring is a mix between gray and silver.



“I imagine we’ll soon have snow,” remarks *Madame Sweet*. “There’s lots of snow up in the mountains. My brother, who loves to ski, was on the slopes yesterday and he told me the mountains are piled high with snow.”

“My daughters will be very happy,” says *Madame Rosemarie*. “Soon they’ll be home from university for their Christmas break and will want to go skiing.”

“I won’t be here for the holidays,” says *Madame Sweet*. “This year I’m planning to spend some time with my sister who lives in the south of France.”

“I’m sure you’ll have a lovely time,” comments *Madame Rosemarie*.

“Yes, I’m very much looking forward to this visit,” replies *Madame Sweet*. “In fact, I’ll be leaving in two days.”

Madame Rosemarie hears the phone ringing.

“I’d better get that,” she says. “It may be one of my girls.”

“*Bonjour*,” says *Madame Rosemarie*. “It’s lovely to hear your voice. We’re all well. This is wonderful news. I look forward to seeing you soon. I’ll send you an email with all the information. Good-bye.”

Madame Rosemarie goes back to join *Madame Sweet* in the living room.

“That was *Signora Cura* calling from Rome,” she announces. “She and her husband will be in Geneva in a few days to attend a dog show. Their dog, Bella, will be competing in the show. I’ve invited them all for dinner.”



“How convenient,” states *Madame Sweet*.
“Geneva is only a few miles from here.”

I can't wait to see Bella, thinks *Voltaire*, smiling and wagging his tail.



Voltaire met *Bella* in Rome earlier this year, when he, *Madame Rosemarie* and *Max* went to visit friends in Rome. *Voltaire* and *Bella* had a lot of fun playing together and became very attached to each other.

Voltaire starts to run around the house, wagging his tail.

I wonder what's wrong with Voltaire, thinks *Zoa*.

Max, *Zoa*, *Tish*, and *Say What* follow *Voltaire* into the hallway, which is off the living room and leads to the front door.

“What’s wrong, *Voltaire*?” asks *Tish*.

“Nothing,” replies *Voltaire*. “I’m just happy.”

“Are you looking forward to seeing *Bella*?” asks *Max*.

“Yes, I am,” answers *Voltaire*.

“Is she your special friend?” asks Say What.

“I like spending time with her,” replies Voltaire. “We had fun in Rome.”

“So, tell us more about Bella,” insists Zoa. “When you came home from your visit to Rome, you only said that you met a nice dog at the dog beach and you had fun playing with her.”

“She’s a show dog,” responds Voltaire. “Bella has white fur like you, Zoa. She likes to swim. Bella can also do lots of tricks. She’s won many ribbons at dog shows. I’m sure you’ll like her.”

“Does Bella like to cuddle?” asks Tish.

“I don’t know if Bella likes to cuddle, but I’m sure she’ll like you, Tish,” replies Voltaire.

“Does Bella like cats?” asks Zoa.

“She was very nice to Max and our cat friends in Rome,” answers Voltaire.

“I’d better get going,” says *Madame* Sweet. “I still have lots of things to do before I travel. I hope you have a lovely holiday.”

“You, too,” answers *Madame* Rosemarie.

Madame Rosemarie lives with her furry friends in a small town in France called Ferney-Voltaire, near the border of Switzerland. When *Madame* Rosemarie and Voltaire went to Rome earlier in the year to visit friends, they met *Signora* and *Signore* Cura and their dog, Bella.



Madame Rosemarie goes into her study and brings a box full of wrapping paper and ribbons into the living room. Max and Voltaire sit down near the couch, to watch what she is doing. Say What has gone outside to do a bit of exploring. Zoa is perched on a window sill and Tish is warming himself near the fireplace.

I have lots of presents to wrap, thinks Madame Rosemarie. Christmas is only three weeks away.

I remember my first Christmas with Madame Rosemarie, thinks Voltaire. I'm glad she adopted me. Now I have lots of cat friends and soon Bella will be coming to visit. I'm a lucky dog.

I like Christmas, thinks Max. I was lonely when I lived in the bakery. When Madame Rosemarie agreed to give me a home, I wasn't sure what to

expect. Making new friends isn't always easy. When I first got here, Zoa, Tish and Say What weren't too friendly. Over time, we learned to get along and become friends. Then, Voltaire came to live with us. I tried to welcome him into the household. I knew he was a bit nervous about living with four cats. As time went by, we all learned to live together and now we're pals.

The next morning, *Madame* Rosemarie is sitting at the table drinking her coffee. She's reading one of her recipe books.

What shall I make for dinner tomorrow? thinks *Madame* Rosemarie. *Yes, this recipe looks good. I'll make a leg of lamb, rice, and a nice green salad, followed by an apple tart for dessert.*

She calls Voltaire, who is playing in the yard.

"I'm going food shopping," she says. "Come inside. I'll be back soon."

Voltaire sits down on the rug in the living room. After a few minutes, Max, Zoa, Tish, and Say What come inside and sit down next to him.

"I'm looking forward to seeing *Madame* Rosemarie's daughters, Elise and Kate," declares Tish. "They like to cuddle with me. Voltaire, do you want to cuddle?"

"No, thanks," answers Voltaire. "I just feel like relaxing right now."



“I won’t drool,” says Tish.

“Okay,” sighs Voltaire. “Let’s cuddle.”



“You’re a true friend, Voltaire,” says Tish.

“I don’t feel like sitting around the house,” states Zoa. “I think I’ll go for a walk in the park. I like to watch the children on the swings. Do you want to come along, Tish?”

“Okay,” replies Tish.

“I think I’ll also go out and see what’s going on in the neighborhood,” announces Say What.

“See you later,” says Max. “I’ll stay here with Voltaire.”

“So, what’s up, Voltaire?” asks Max. “You seem preoccupied.”

“I’m thinking about Bella,” answers Voltaire. “Do you think she still likes me?”

“Of course, she does,” replies Max. “I’m sure Bella likes you very much. I’ve noticed that when she is with you, she has a twinkle in her eye.”

“But Bella is a show dog,” says Voltaire. “I’m just a regular dog.”

“You’re a great dog,” states Max. “You’re smart, brave and kind. Besides, Bella meets lots of dogs when she goes to shows but she chose you as her special friend. Remember how brave you were when you found out that Say What had been hurt? You jumped over that high hedge and ran to help him.”

“I feel better now,” says Voltaire. “Thanks, Max.”

The next evening, *Signora* and *Signore* Cura and Bella arrive at *Madame* Rosemarie’s house. *Signore* Cura rings the doorbell. *Madame* Rosemarie opens

the door. Voltaire is standing next to her. Max, Zoa, Tish, and Say What are huddled behind Voltaire.

“Welcome,” says *Madame* Rosemarie. “Please come in.”

“We were looking forward to seeing you again,” says *Signora* Cura.

Madame Rosemarie and her guests go into the living room. Voltaire and Bella rub noses. Max walks up to Bella and they rub noses, too. Zoa, Tish and Say What are keeping a safe distance from Bella, while observing Bella and Voltaire.

It’s great to see Voltaire again, thinks Bella. I’ve missed him. I’ve missed Max, too. I hope that their cat pals will like me.



“I see that Bella and Voltaire are happy to meet again,” observes *Madame* Rosemarie. “Bella also seems pleased to see Max. I think I should introduce

Bella to the other cats. Bella, this is Zoa, Tish and Say What.”

I hope they remember what to do, thinks Voltaire.

In turn, Zoa, Tish and Say What go up to Bella and rub noses.

What well-behaved cats! thinks Bella. *And, I see that Voltaire is wearing his Italian collar. I have a feeling that Voltaire is doing his best to make me feel welcome here. How sweet.*

"It looks like Bella and her new cat friends will get along nicely," comments *Signore Cura*.

That went well, thinks Max. *Voltaire certainly made us practice enough!*

"That was a great dinner," says *Signore Cura*. "You're a very good cook."

"Thank you," says *Madame Rosemarie*. "I enjoy cooking for friends."

"We told Marco, our son whom you met in Bologna, that we would be seeing you," says *Signora Cura*. "He asked us to give you his best regards. He'll be home for the holidays in a few weeks and we look forward to seeing him."



“Thank you,” replies *Madame* Rosemarie. “He’s a delightful young man. Please send him my good wishes.”

“Tomorrow is the last day of the dog show,” says *Signora* Cura. “We’d like to invite you and Voltaire to come and see Bella compete tomorrow afternoon at the Geneva Convention Center.”

“I’m sure Voltaire would enjoy this outing,” replies *Madame* Rosemarie. “He likes to go for rides in the car. The Center is only a 10-minute car drive from my house. I’ve never been to a dog show, and look forward to seeing Bella perform.”

“After the show, we’re going skiing for a week in Chamonix (pronounced shah-moh-nee). Would you and Voltaire like to join us for a few days?”

“This is very kind of you, but my neighbor, who usually takes care of my pets when I travel, will be out of town, and I can’t leave the cats alone,” states *Madame* Rosemarie.

“Oh,” says *Signora* Cura. “You can bring them along. We’ve rented a *chalet*, so there’s plenty of space for all of us. The cats and Bella seem to be getting along well.”

“In that case, I accept your kind invitation. Although I don’t ski anymore, I do like to walk in the mountains, and I look forward to spending a bit of time with you and *Signore* Cura. I’m sure Voltaire and Bella would also like to play together for a few

days.”

“Wonderful,” declares *Signora* Cura. “Marco visited Chamonix last year. He told us it’s a charming mountain town. It was the site of the very first Winter Olympics back in 1924. The very first gold medal was awarded to an American for speed skating.”

After *Signora* and *Signore* Cura and Bella leave, *Madame* Rosemarie goes into the kitchen to clean up. Voltaire, Max, Zoa, Tish, and Say What sit down near the fireplace in the living room.

“I’m really excited about attending a dog show,” says Voltaire. “I wonder if Bella is nervous. If I had to perform in front of lots of people, I would be nervous. But she’s always very cool and calm so maybe this doesn’t bother her. I’m so happy Bella has come to visit.”

“I’m sure it’ll be lots of fun,” says Max.

“I’m looking forward to going on a trip to the mountains,” notes Zoa. “I wonder what the air smells like on top of a mountain.”

“I wonder if mice live in the mountains,” says Say What.

“I don’t like snow,” chimes in Tish. “My feet get cold.”

“You can stay inside, Tish,” says Zoa.

After lunch, the following day, *Madame* Rosemarie and Voltaire go to the Convention Center

in Geneva, Switzerland where the dog show is being held. *Signore* Cura is waiting for them at the entrance. *Madame* Rosemarie arrives with Voltaire on his leash. She also had to muzzle him, in accordance with the rules set out by the organizers of the dog show. All visiting dogs must be muzzled to avoid any potential problems. They follow *Signore* Cura and take their seats.

I've never seen so many dogs in one place before, thinks Voltaire. *I see Bella down there, with Signora Cura. Bella looks so pretty.*

"Bella is a Volpino," explains *Signore* Cura. "This is a rare breed of dog, found mostly in Italy. The name means *little fox* in Italian. Her ancestry can be traced back to ancient Roman times. The Volpino is an active and lively dog and very attached to his or her family. It's said that the Volpino doesn't get along well with other dogs or pets. However, Bella seems to have taken a liking to Voltaire and his cat pals. My guess is that she thinks of them as family."

Madame Rosemarie, *Signore* Cura and Voltaire watch Bella perform. After all the dogs have completed their routines, the judges come out to choose the winners. The judge calls out Bella's name.

"Congratulations," says *Madame* Rosemarie. "Bella has won the top prize, a blue ribbon. That's wonderful!"



“Thank you,” replies *Signore Cura*. “I had a feeling she would win today. She seems so happy to be here.”

Wow, thinks Voltaire, Bella won first prize! That’s pretty good. She was the best performer in the group. I like the way she stood up on her hind legs and turned around and around. She’s so graceful!

Madame Rosemarie, *Signore* Cura and *Voltaire* go to find *Signora* Cura and Bella to congratulate them. When Bella sees *Voltaire*, she runs up to him and gives him a love lick. *Voltaire* is still wearing his muzzle.



I want to give Bella a dog lick, too, thinks Voltaire. But, I can't open my mouth with this muzzle. I'll give her a love lick tomorrow.

"We'll stop by your house tomorrow after lunch," says Signora Cura. "We can all drive up to Chamonix together."

“That sounds good,” replies *Madame* Rosemarie. “Thank you for a lovely afternoon. I must go back home now to prepare dinner. See you all tomorrow.”

When *Madame* Rosemarie and Voltaire leave the grounds of the Center, she takes off the muzzle.

Ah, thinks Voltaire, *this is much better*.