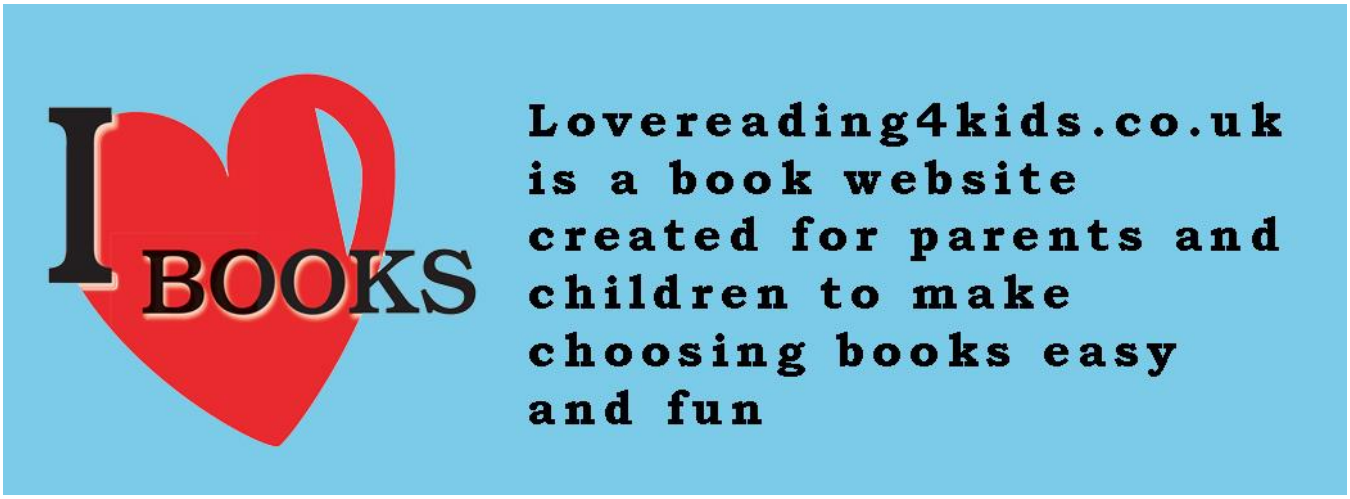


Opening extract from

The Hundred-Mile-An-Hour Dog: Master of Disguise

Written by

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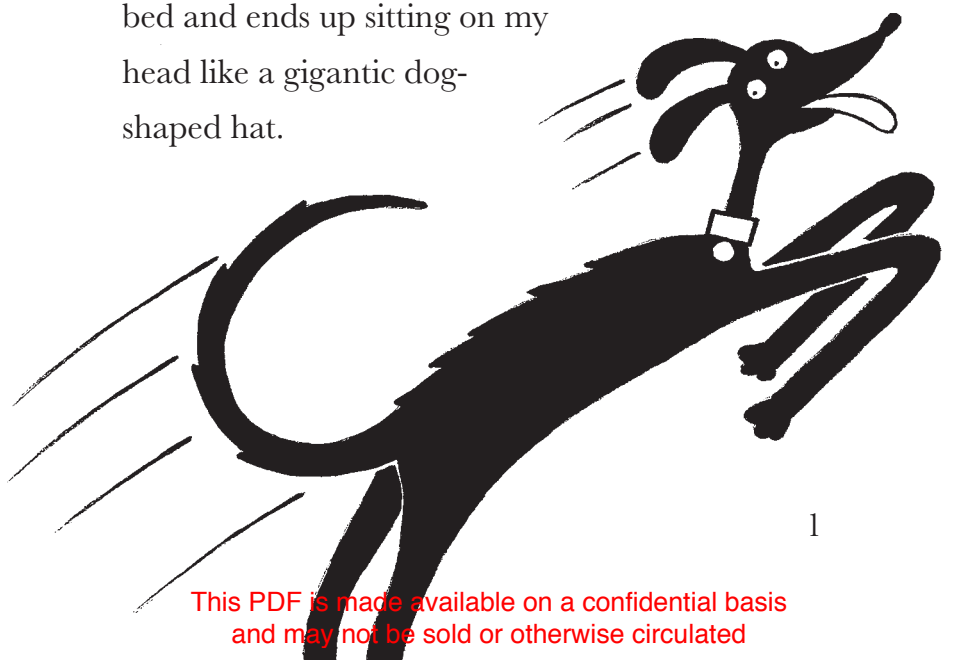
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1. Rabbits!

Streaker is the speediest dog in the world. She can run faster than a bullet overtaking another bullet. She runs ALL the time, even when she's sleeping. She lies on my bed at night, snoring, and her whiskers are twitching, her ears are flicking and her legs are going gallopy gallop gallop. Sometimes her legs are running so much she actually moves along the bed and ends up sitting on my head like a gigantic dog-shaped hat.



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Everyone in my house is pretty sporty. Streaker is always galloping. Mum is always cycling, or running, or swimming, or exercising. As for Dad, he's always playing golf, but is that a sport? Really? All you do is wander about and hit things from time to time or look for them. Dad spends most of his time hunting for his golf balls. That's because he keeps hitting them into the trees, ponds and bunkers that cover the golf course.

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Or maybe it's because when Streaker finds them she tries to eat them and then she's sick. Urrgh. Then WHO gets into trouble? Me. ME! Did I eat Dad's golf balls? No. Was I sick on the carpet? No. But you see whenever Streaker causes a problem I'm the one that gets the blame because Streaker is MY dog. That's what Dad says.

'She's your dog, Trevor. You clear up the mess.'

'But Dad, you decided we had to have a dog. You bought her and told us she was the family dog.'

'Yes, I did, Trevor. You're quite right. She is the family dog and it's your family job to look after her. Now go and clear up that dog sick.'

Huh. I can't win, can I? What's more I'm supposed to take Streaker for walks. That's what Dad says. Well, you can't just WALK Streaker. Streaker doesn't WALK anywhere. She runs. She dashes. She whizzes. At full speed. *Swoooosh!* She's the fastest dog on the planet. In fact, she's probably the fastest dog in the universe.

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So here we are in the middle of the Easter school break and I've got to walk Streaker because everyone else is busy. When I say 'everyone else' I mean Mum and Dad and when I say 'busy' I mean Dad is out playing golf and Mum is tinkering with her new bike. Sigh. My mum and her bikes. Let me explain.

Mum has just bought herself a racing bike. Maybe I should tell you that she already has two mountain bikes.

'You've got to keep fit, Trev,' she pants, halfway through doing thirty press-ups.



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'I do keep fit, Mum. I have to walk Streaker. Remember? That means running everywhere. Anyhow, why do you need a new bike?'

Mum grinned up at me. 'Triathlon. I'm taking part in one.'

I had to ask. 'What's a triathlon?'

'It's a special race. You have to do three things – swim, ride and run. You wear a special suit that means you don't have to change. First you swim, then you jump on your bike, pedal like mad, jump off and run the final bit to the finish line.'

'Sounds mad,' I suggested. 'Why would anyone want to do that?'

Mum's grin got bigger. 'Exercise, Trev, exercise. You don't want a baggy, wrinkly mum, do you?'

I shook my head, but really I don't care what Mum looks like. She's my mum and that's all there is to it. It's just like people say – you can choose your friends but you can't choose your family. You're stuck with them for the rest of your life – and never forget that they're stuck with you!

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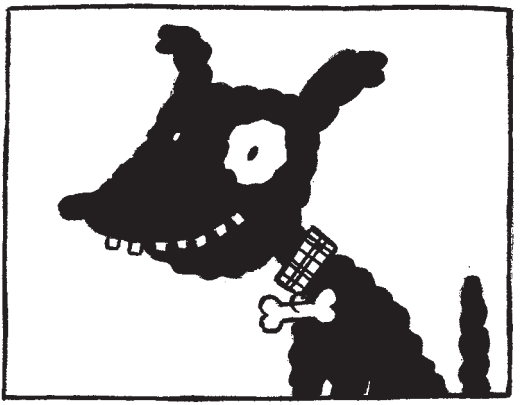
Anyway, I had a dog to walk so I decided to take Streaker up near the golf course. She likes it up there because there are lots of rabbits that she likes to chase. Luckily, there are also lots of holes for the rabbits to disappear down. You can almost hear them laughing: *Ha ha! We fooled that silly old dog. Fancy thinking she could catch us! Hee hee hee.* And then they all have a party to celebrate their escape and drink carrot juice and eat carrot cake and pop carrot-shaped balloons.

I put Streaker on the lead and headed up towards the footpath next to the golf course. When I say 'headed' I really meant that I was DRAGGED AT HIGH SPEED BY A DESPERATE DOG. (The desperate dog being Streaker of course.) Honestly, it's like being pulled along by a Ferrari with a tow bar. Streaker does this every time we go out. It's astonishing that I even managed to catch sight of the little posters stuck on all the lamp posts we passed.

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MY DOG HAS BEEN STOLEN!



My dog, Pooper, was stolen from outside the supermarket on Tuesday.

Please contact me if you have any information.

£50 reward if successful.

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Well, that was food for thought. What kind of person would call their dog Pooper? Even so, it's no fun having your dog stolen. You'd be pretty upset. Mind you, I couldn't imagine my dad coughing up fifty pounds to find Streaker. Nevertheless, it was a lot of money, the sort of money you might need to pay to have your arms stuck back on your body because your dog had just pulled them off.

'STREAKER! Why can't you just WALK?'

Does she listen? Of course not. She doesn't even turn round to see who's speaking. Her nose is pointing in one direction only and the rest of her is following. I spend most of my time trying to hold on to every passing lamp post, telephone pole, bush or front gate.

Anyhow, we got up to the fields and I let Streaker off her lead. *Zoooosh!* She was off like a rabbit-seeking missile. I simply stood there and watched as Streaker raced across that field, round it, criss-crossing it, until at last she spotted – THE RABBIT!

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Quick! Warp Factor Five! Streaker's legs were a blur of speed. I almost expected to see her take off. The rabbit just sat there and watched. You'd better move, Mr Rabbit! Streaker's going to get you this time!

Streaker was charging at full pelt towards the rabbit and just when she was almost on top of it the rabbit disappeared down its hole, which it had been sitting right next to the entire time.

Mr Rabbit was definitely playing hide-and-seek because a moment later up he popped from another hole just a few metres away from where Streaker now had her nose buried down the first hole. I had to laugh. The rabbit was sitting right behind Streaker and watching, while Streaker kept pushing her nose uselessly into the hole.

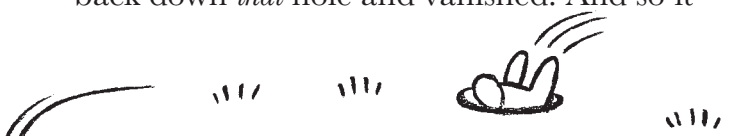
At last she noticed Mr Rabbit, whirled round and, just as Streaker jumped, the rabbit popped



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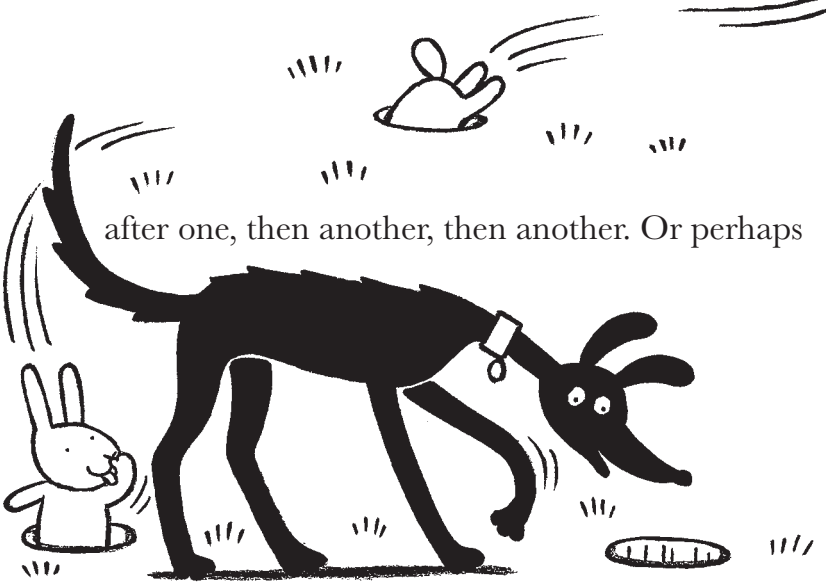
back down *that* hole and vanished. And so it



began all over again. Rabbits kept popping up



all over the field while Streaker dashed fruitlessly



after one, then another, then another. Or perhaps they were all the same rabbit. Who knows? (Mr Rabbit, probably!)

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I got bored watching Streaker and turned to the golf course instead where several groups of players were wandering about, hunting for their golf balls. Then I saw Tina on the other side of the course. She was taking Mouse for a walk. (Mouse is actually a huge St Bernard. I guess you could say that Mouse is one big joke.)

OK, let's get this straight right away. Tina is my friend. She's a very good friend. I like her. She's clever and funny. She's a friend. Just that. She's not my GIRLfriend, OK? I know she says she is, but that's just her. I'm telling you she's not. And I know my mum and dad like to say she's my girlfriend, but she ISN'T. She's just a friend. Have I made that quite clear? Good. We only hold hands sometimes and that's only because she gets scared.

I waved across at her. Tina stopped and waved back. Mouse stopped and waved back. (No, of course he didn't! It was just his tongue doing a lot of flopping about.)

That was when Streaker spotted Mouse and

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Mouse spotted Streaker. Now Streaker and Mouse are best friends, a bit like me and Tina, and I don't mean they hold paws with each other. They're just always pleased to see each other. So Streaker goes tearing across the golf course, and Mouse goes plodding towards her, and when they reach each other they happen to be right beside one of those sandpit things you see on golf courses. (They're called bunkers. Don't ask me why. I think they should be called bonkers instead of bunkers. Bonkers is a much better word for something as daft as a sandpit in the middle of a golf course.)

So Streaker and Mouse go rolling into the bunker and start jumping on top of each other and kicking the sand around and soon there's sand going everywhere. The two dogs are growling and leaping and rolling and shaking their fur and having the best play fight ever when all of a sudden – *PLOPPP!* A golf ball comes whizzing out of nowhere and lands in the bunker.

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The dogs take no notice and just carry on with their play fight. Then three golfers come along. Oh dear, one of them is my dad and, even worse, he's with Sergeant Smugg, our local policeman, and Mr Boffington-Orr, who is not only the Chief Constable but also president of the golf club.

Do they look happy? No, they don't.

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'Get those wretched dogs out of that bunker!' yelled the Chief Constable. 'My ball is in there somewhere. We're midway through a game. Get those dogs *out*!'

'No dogs allowed!' bellowed Sergeant Smugg. 'Oi! I know that black one. That's Streaker! She's always causing trouble.'

My dad had turned white. Who could he blame? Oh, I know – ME!

'Trevor!' he yelled. 'Get the dogs out of there at once!'

I started to run towards the bunker, but there wasn't much point because Streaker had suddenly discovered the Chief Constable's ball and she was on it like a shot, grabbing it in her mouth and running off, with Mouse close behind her. Not far behind Mouse came two rabbits and then the Chief Constable and Sergeant Smugg. Dad just stood and watched in dismay. Oh dear. There's trouble ahead.

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