KING WORM JACK



BY
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For Isla

Also available by Natalie Gordon for readers aged 9+

Mr. Nobody

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Chapter 1

"Hey, look! It's just like you!" Seb held up a long, wrinkly worm between his thumb and forefinger and waved it in front of Jack. "Ugly, slimy and useless at football."

He threw it into Jack's face. Seb was too close and too quick for Jack to jump out of the way, so the cold, clammy body of the worm smacked against Jack's cheek, and fell into the flowerbed at his feet. Seb picked up his football from the same flowerbed and kicked it back onto the lawn.

"Wor-m, wor-m, wor-m" chanted Seb as he dribbled the football down the garden and kicked it into the top left-hand corner of the net. "GOAAAL!" he yelled, sliding on his knees with his fists clenched in the air above him.

Starting secondary school, had made Seb even more mean than usual. And to make it worse, their mum and dad never seemed to notice, even though it was REALLY obvious.

"It's supper time!" shouted their mum from the back door. "Time to come in and wash your hands." She paused, staring at Jack. "Especially you, Jack. What ARE you doing in the flowerbed?"

Jack was on his hands and knees trying to find the worm. He wanted to make sure it was okay, but he thought it had maybe already wriggled away. Lucky worm. Sometimes he thought he'd like to wriggle away where no one could find *him*. Especially where Seb couldn't find him.

Jack sighed and got up, brushing the mud off his knees. Max came meowing up to him, rubbing himself against his trousers.

"Cats are useless," sneered Seb as he walked past. "He's not meowing 'cos he likes you; he's just hungry. Bet you wish you had a dog. Dogs are proper pets."

Right then, Scarlet, Seb's dog, came bounding out of the house and ran up to Seb, woofing madly, like she'd really missed him in the ten minutes they'd been outside.

Jack *had* wished he could have his own dog, but because they already had one, he wasn't allowed one. His parents had offered to get him a cat instead for his 8th birthday.

He hadn't really wanted a cat, but when they went to the pet rescue place in the summer holidays, Max had walked straight up to Jack, and chosen him. He'd rubbed his nose against Jack's shin, sat down, looked up at him and meowed, like he was asking to come home with him. Jack's resistance to cats melted away right then. He just knew that Max was going to be a zillion times better than any dog.

"Jack! I won't ask you again! Stop daydreaming, get out of the flowerbed, come in for supper and do NOT leave a trail of mud behind you!"

Jack walked slowly towards the house. The other thing that he wished, apart from being able to wriggle away like the wrinkly worm, was that he was an only child, like his best friend, Sally.

Sally had her parents all to herself. They had nobody to compare her to, so she could be really bad at maths, but she'd be the best child in their house at maths. She was lucky. Actually, she was very clever too, so she'd never be bad at maths. The only bad thing in Sally's life as far as Jack could see, was their teacher, Mr. Prickles, and he was bad in *everybody's* life.

He'd told his mum how horrible Mr. Prickles was, but he knew she didn't believe him. When he'd been Seb's teacher, Seb had loved him. And Seb had won the county creative writing competition that

year with a stupid story about a boy and his dog. So, of course, his parents and Seb all thought that Mr. Prickles was an amazing teacher. It was just one more reason why they thought Jack was useless. Useless at football, useless at maths, useless at stories, useless at everything.

"Meow!" Max ran round Jack's legs and into the house, leaving little muddy pawprints behind him.

"Jack!" yelled his mum. "Get that cat out of here!"