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Opening extract from

Lost: The Hundred mile an hour dog

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Chapter 1 Pies!

It wasn't my fault. All I did was jump in the back of a van. What's wrong with that? In fact I was being really helpful. Trevor Two-Legs – the boy who is supposed to look after me – had gone wandering off. He's always doing that and then he gets lost. He should be kept on a lead. Trevor's hopeless when he's lost and he starts calling for me. 'Streaker? STREAKER!' What am I supposed to do? I KNOW WHERE I AM. HE'S THE ONE THAT'S LOST!

Anyhow, Trevor had disappeared as usual, leaving me all on my own. I was trotting about sniff-sniffing and there was this van with the back doors open, so I had a peep inside and guess what? It was full of pies and sausage rolls. It was! A whole van full of pies and rolls. My favourite!

And I was thinking: *Hmmm, fancy leaving all those pies lying about like that. Someone could easily come along and steal the whole lot.*

The thing is, I've always fancied being a super-clever-guard-dog type of dog, only I've never been given the chance. I'd be an extra-super-special guard dog and I'd probably have super-powers too, and an extra-special name. I'd call myself DAZZY DONUT DOG.

That's DAZZY because Dazzy is a super-special word, and DONUT because Dazzy Donut Dog likes eating Donuts. (Of course, really it's me – I like donuts. A WHOLE LOT.) And it's DOG because I'm a dog.

Dazzy Donut Dog lives in my head, where nobody can see her, except me. She has amazing super-special-powers, which she gets from eating SUPER-SPECIAL-POWER DAZZY DONUTS, with jam inside, or icing on the top. I keep all the donuts in my head too, but it's a BIG SECRET, so don't tell anyone.

Whenever there's trouble all I have to do is eat one of the super-special-power-donuts and KER-CHING!! I become Dazzy Donut Dog and go *Whizz! Whoosh! Grrrrrr! Gotcha!*

But that Trevor, he's useless. He never gives me anything to guard. I'm not complaining, because I like Trevor and his mum and dad. It's just that they're all a bit useless, being two-legs. Fancy having only two legs! That's a bit naff, isn't it?

I've never been given the chance to show them what I can really do. I could be the best guard dog ever, and if a robber came along I'd leap out and bark furiously and jump up and down – *Boing-wuff! Boing-wuff!* – like that. And if they came too close I'd dive at their ankles and bite them, *Raargh-raargh, crunch-crunch!* like that. And they'd go *Ow-wow-wow!* like that, and I'd go, *Huh! serves you right, rotten robber. You shouldn't go around stealing things. Dazzy Donut Dog is on your case!* Then they'd run away, slowly, because they only have two naff legs.

So there I was, the superest, dooperest guard dog ever, and right now, right there in front of me, almost touching my nose and almost almost almost in my mouth even – there were all these pies and sausage rolls just lying there. I could almost hear them calling out to me: *Hey, we're over here, lots of lovely pies just ready to be stolen!*

STUPID PIES! So I thought, right, I will be Dazzy Donut Dog and get in the back of this van and stand guard over it. I shall probably get a medal for doing this and meet the Queen, but I hope she doesn't pin it on me because that would make me jump. It would have to be on a ribbon. A yellow one.

And I'd probably get a reward too, like a lifetime's supply of pies and I could take it back for my three puppies, because they are the best puppies IN THE WHOLE WORLD and I love them to bits and pieces of bits. Then my pups would know what a brave and clever mum they have and guess who that is? ME!

That was why I got in the back of the van. There I was, busily checking it out to make sure there wasn't a pie thief hiding somewhere, and what did I find? A big sausage roll, on the floor. In fact, not just one, but three sausage rolls, lying ON THE FLOOR! How stupid can a sausage roll get? That's asking for trouble, isn't it?

I said, 'Hello, hello. What are you lot doing out of your box?' And I was about to pick one up and put it with the others when I thought: *Hmmm, this might be a pretend sausage roll.*

I know you can get pretend pies because I ate one once. It was a mistake. I didn't mean to eat it. At least, that's not exactly true – I DID mean to eat it but that was because I thought it was a real pie, but it turned out to be made of painted plastic. It tasted horrible and I had to spit it out. SPLUUURRRRGH! Like that.

All these splinters of plastic came shooting out of my mouth and made a mess and lots of people shouted at me and I got chased (again), but I didn't care because I can run like a crazy thing, like a rocket, like an un-guided missile. In fact, I am probably the fastest dog in the whole world. (Though I'm not very good at stopping.) Besides, they shouldn't make plastic pies. What is the point of that?!

Anyway, I thought: *This roll could be like that nasty pie and there's only one way I know to check if the sausage roll is real and that is to taste it.*

Chapter 2 The Pie Robber

I picked up one of the rolls with my teeth. It certainly felt like a sausage roll. That was the first good sign. And it certainly smelt like a sausage roll. That was the second good sign, so I licked it all over just to make sure, and it certainly tasted like a sausage roll, and that was the best sign of all.

I looked at the roll and the roll looked at me and I was thinking: *Aha! Suppose it only tastes like a sausage roll on the outside, but the inside is made of something horrible, like mustard, or custard?* Well, there's only one way to check for that, so I bit into it, and guess what? It wasn't made of custard or mustard. It was made of sausage. Right the way through.

The roll was a bit chewed up by this time so I thought I might as well swallow it. Then I checked the other two sausage rolls that were lying on the floor to make sure they weren't pretending, and guess what? They weren't. So that meant the only thing to do was to stay there and guard the rest of the pies and rolls and make sure that nobody came along and tried to eat them.

That was when I had my CLEVER IDEA. Now then, Trevor Two-Legs gets pocket money and he puts it in a piggy bank to keep it safe from robbers. So my clever idea was this. I thought: *I can put all those pies in a special bank for pies, and then nobody can steal them.* I haven't got a piggy bank, but I do have a doggy bank. In fact, I AM a doggy bank!

Wasn't that a brilliant idea?! So I started eating as many pies and rolls as I could so they would be safe. Then I saw a two-legs coming towards the back of the van. He was a SAUSAGE ROLL ROBBER! I know he was a robber because he was wearing dark glasses. This was going to be my big moment. I'd definitely get a medal and a lifetime's supply of pies for this!

I crouched down behind a crate and got ready to growl and bark and leap up and throw myself at his ankles and go RAARGH! RAARGH!

The thing was though, the man didn't steal any pies or sausage rolls. All he did was shut the door. BANG! And I was still inside. I felt him climb into the front of the van and the engine started up and we were off. VROOOM!

He wasn't supposed to do that! He wasn't supposed to steal the whole van! He was only supposed to steal the pies! I shall never understand two-legs. What was the point in taking the whole van when all he had to do was reach inside and take the pies from the back?

We rattled off down the road and I was wondering what to do. I soon realized that my first duty as a guard dog was to protect the rest of the rolls and pies and get them safe inside my doggy bank. So I ate them, which meant getting them out of their boxes and everything. I'm so clever!

Then I barked and barked, woof-woof-WOOF! But the driver man didn't hear me. I threw myself at the back wall of the cab. I leaped at it and scritch-scratched it and bit it and barked, but it was no use. HE WAS DEAF!

Two-legs have got terrible hearing. Not like me. I can hear ants snoring when it's ant bedtime. But two-legs always have such silly, small ears – have you noticed? It's no wonder they can't hear properly. Mine are big and flappy like proper ears should be. And my pups have got ears like flags!

I tried to sit down, but the van was on wriggly roads. I got thrown all over the place and soon I felt a bit sick. I'm sure it wasn't the pies, it was the van, and before long I really was sick. I was a bit miffed at first because I thought my plan wouldn't work now, because half the rolls and pies were back on the van floor, even if they were a bit mushy. But then I remembered how picky two-legs are when it comes to food. They probably wouldn't want them now. Not when they were all gloopy and steaming.

We travelled for ages. It felt like about a year at least and it had gone dark too. The van slowed down and squeaked to a stop. I went and hid behind a crate so I could leap out at the robber and go RAARGH! RAARGH!

The back door opened. I peeped out. The two-legs was bald and he'd taken off his dark glasses. I thought: *That's odd. He doesn't look so robber-ish now.* As he opened the door he staggered back, holding his nose and staring at the brown piles on the van floor. I thought: *Aha, this is my moment of glory! I shall get a medal and meet the Queen!*

So in my head I ate a super-special-power donut and became the wonderfully brave and fearless Dazzy Donut Dog. I hurled myself out from behind the crate and I started to go RAARGH RAARGH, but my tummy was still feeling upset from the ride and I threw up instead, all down his trousers. He screamed like a lady with a big spider and, well, I know that kind of scream. It means trouble, so I ran for it as fast as I could, which was a lot faster than him with only two naff legs and I disappeared into the night. Ha ha! I am so clever sometimes.

And then I discovered where I was. Or to put it another way, I discovered where I wasn't. It was the middle of nowhere. I was hopelessly LOST.

Chapter 3 The Middle of Nowhere

What a dark and moonless night! It was a bit creepy, I can tell you. The wind howled and an owl hooted. They are such old ladies, owls. All they ever do is go *Whoo-hoooo!* like they're scared of the dark. Why don't they get up during the day when the sun's shining? I'm not scared of the dark at all because Dazzy Donut Dog is not scared of ANYTHING.

It was eerily quiet, apart from that daft owl. I wandered along a wide, empty street with big buildings. They were even bigger than the building I ran into last week by mistake. I'd never seen so many books. I got chased out by three screaming women and one of them tried to hit me with a magazine and I hadn't even done anything! Anyhow she missed, because I am the superest dog at zigzagging and can run like a TORNADO!

The buildings were lit by orange lights and surrounded by tall, wire fences. The fences had big signs with pictures on. Sometimes it was a skull, and sometimes it was a two-legs being struck by lightning and it was making him jump-jump-jump, like he was going *Ooh! Ow! Stop it!* I knew what those signs meant – they meant DANGER! KEEP OUT!

I sat down so I could have a thinking kind of scratch. I scratched behind my right ear and under my chin. I scratched my chest and the top of my head and behind my left ear. Then I scratched in front of my left ear, and the funny thing was, I still didn't know where I was. I thought: *There must be a sensible way to do this. What I need to do is start with what I already know. It will be like putting the pieces of a puzzle together.*

So I started sorting things out, like this:

{list}

Question 1:	Where am I?
Answer:	I don't know.
Question 2:	Which direction is home?
Answer:	I don't know.
Question 3:	Are there any pies left?
Answer:	I don't know. The van's gone now and anyway, what have pies got to do with finding your way home?
Question 4:	You've ruined it now. You've just asked a question and it was supposed to be an answer.
Answer:	And now you've given an answer when you were supposed to be asking a question.
Question 5:	Will you stop doing things the wrong way round?
Answer:	Oh good, that was a proper question. Ask me another.
Question 6:	If you don't know the way home, how can you find out?
Answer:	Ask someone.
Question 7:	That's a really good idea.
Answer:	That isn't a question. That's just conversation.

{list ends}

After that I got tired of talking to myself and decided I really couldn't do anything more until it was morning so I started to look for somewhere to sleep.

I hunted and hunted but everywhere was just roads and big buildings with hardly any windows, and wire fencing. I walked right round to see if there might be a place where I could get in. I came to some enormous gates covered with skulls and people getting hit by lightning and going *Ooh! Ow! Stop it!* I sat down and wondered why nobody was allowed in.

Anyhow, I was sitting there, wondering where I could sleep, when all at once two gigantic massive monster mutts as big as rhinoceroses came thundering across and hurled themselves at me from the other side of the chain-link fence.

Well! I just sat there and looked at them. I mean, what was all THAT about? Couldn't they see the wire? They clawed at it with their paws and foam was bubbling out of their

mouths. They rolled their bloodshot eyes and growled like nothing on earth. ‘GRR$%&*@RRR!’ Honestly, the language they used! It was dreadful.

‘Good evening,’ I replied, because I think if you’re polite then there’s no reason for anyone to get upset.

And they said: ‘Why don’t you *&^%$£ back to your wormhole you @£$%^& *&^%$ %£$^%&*@**% *&^%$£@’

‘Oh, really?’ I answered coolly. ‘Well, the trouble, dear friends, is that I’m afraid you don’t have any brains.’

You should have seen them! They went crazy-mad! They launched themselves at the fence again, roaring and cursing – it was such bad language. I got to my feet and walked up and down in front of them.

‘I say, you chaps, haven’t you noticed that there’s a four-metre high chain-link fence between us, which YOU CAN’T GET THROUGH? What’s all the fuss about, you BONE-HEADED CLOD-PODS? Look at you, all big and muscly and foaming at the mouth, and you can’t do anything because YOU’RE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE, TWIT-POODLES!’

Then I began to copy their barking and went: ‘OH, WOOF WOOFY WOOF. I’M A BIG BAD DOG WITH NO BRAINS. WOOF WOOF.’

They got so mad they tried to climb up the fence! They did! Completely crazy, the pair of them. And then this big, fat two-legs guard came out of his hut to see what all the fuss was about. He tried to shoo me away by shouting and saying stupid things to me like ‘Go home, you daft dog!’ And I shouted back at him that I most certainly would go home if only I knew where it was, but of course he couldn’t understand me because he was a two-legs, with small ears.

Mr Security was shining his torch in my face and banging the fence with his night-stick and yelling, and his two stupid monster mutts kept on barking. They were all so annoying and guess what I did? I was really cool! I went up to the fence, right in front of them, and piddled through the wire on to Mr Security’s boots. Ha ha ha!

That was when he opened the gates and let his dogs out. Oops!

{chap head}4 Whoo-hoo!

Fortunately I am the fastest dog on the planet and I switched on my turbo super-dooper-pooper-charger and went ZOOOOM! It was the last I saw of them and soon I'd left the buildings far behind.

That was a bit of an adventure, but I still didn't have anywhere to sleep and now I was *really* in the middle of nowhere. I wandered around for a while and eventually I found an old cardboard box lying beside a hedge so I crawled beneath it.

It was ages before I got to sleep. I kept thinking about home and my gorgeous pups with their floppy sloppy tongues, and Trevor. He hasn't got a floppy sloppy tongue of course but he's good fun and I can play with him and take him for walks. We make a good team, Trevor and me. I even help with his homework sometimes. He had a problem with triangles the other night and he had to ask me because it was a difficult problem.

'Listen, Streaker, the question says: *What do you call a triangle with two equal sides?*'

Well! That's a stupid question, isn't it? I mean, you can't call a triangle anything except a triangle, can you? You can't call it *biscuit* or *walkies* or *donuts* can you? It's a triangle – so that's what you call it.

Trevor read the question over and he got more and more angry and eventually he shouted at his homework.

'You call it a triangle! Because that's what it is, stupid!'

See? That's what I'd said too! I love helping Trevor, and we think triangles are stupid. And they are too.

Anyway, if I'd been at home I would probably be lying on the end of Trevor's bed with my pups and he'd be snoring, because he does, even if he is only eleven. Sometimes he sounds like a road drill.

I don't mind him snoring because that means he's deeply asleep. Then I can creep up the bed and lie right next to him because I don't see why he should have all the cushy pillows while I only get the bottom bit next to his smelly feet. Besides, if his snoring gets too loud, I climb on top of his head and he stops. That's because he can't breathe. Then all of a sudden he gives a big jerk, mutters *Gerroff*, turns over and goes back to sleep.

But I wasn't at home and I didn't have Trevor to cuddle up to, and I didn't have my puppies. I was under an old, damp cardboard box that stank of cranky-manky soap, a long way from home – wherever that was. All on my own.

When I did get to sleep at last I was immediately woken up by that stupid owl. It landed on top of the box and scrabbled about going scritch-scratch until my brain went banana-bonkers.

'For heaven's sake,' I muttered. 'Stop tap dancing.'

Then it started making silly owl noises. 'Whooo. Whoo-hoooooo.'

'Whoo-hoo to you too,' I wuffed back.

Silence. A minute passed.

'Did you speak?' whispered the owl.

'Yes, I told you to stop tap dancing.'

'Whooooooooo!' went the owl. 'A talking box!'

'Oh, please,' I groaned. 'I'm a dog!'

'Whoooooooo! A talking box that thinks it's a dog!'

'Will you please stop whoo-hoo-ing and go away and find a bit of brain to put in your head?'

'WHOOOOOOOOOOO!' went the owl, so I decided to get up.

Of course I was still under the box so I ended up wandering round wearing a box over my head and back, with a large owl riding on top and *whoooo-ing* with alarm. I barked at it until it flew off. Hooray. That's owls for you. They are the stupidest birds ever. Blackbirds sing. Thrushes sing. Robins sing. What do owls do? They go 'whoooooo', and sound like someone stuck in a wardrobe with a family of giant bats.

I settled back down, fell asleep and had the weirdest dream. I was running, running, running and panting madly. My eyes were bulging. Something was chasing me. A big, black shadow. Why was it so scary? It was a shadow galloping behind me, like I was being chased by a piece of night. There was a strange, hot smell in my nostrils, like somewhere far away and dangerous.

I was running as fast as I could but it felt like my feet were stuck in donut jam, and my puppies were calling out to me, ‘Mum! Mum! Save us!’ My heart was thundering and I woke by leaping to my feet, my eyes wide. I couldn’t see! I’d gone blind! Terror seized me.

Then I realized I still had the cardboard box tipped over my head. I shook myself free and stared out at the coming dawn, panting, heart racing. There was nothing to be seen except a cold streak of light low down in the east. A new day.

I was glad to be awake. I don’t want to have another dream like that. Not ever.

{chap head}5 In the Company of a Killer

I woke up so hungry I could have eaten a hippopotamus, but there wasn't one. Just as well really. They're a lot bigger than I am. I was desperate for food. A dog like me needs regular meals. If I'd been at home Trevor Two-Legs would have put a big bowl of something scrummy-yummy in front of me. And if I'd been in a town it would have been easy. There's always lots of nosh lying about because those two-legs, they drop stuff, and also there are litter bins. And also also also there is daylight robbery. (Which I am quite good at.)

You hang around a food shop and when nobody is looking you snaffle a roast chicken or something. Do you know what the best target is? I will tell you – a two-legs coming out of a burger bar. There they are stepping through the doorway with a big, fat burger and they're trying to cram it into their big, fat mouth. Easy nosh!

You have to plan this and time everything just right. This is how it's done:

{list}

1. Check distance to door. Allow at least five metres.
2. Check area for any two-legs. Make sure you have a clear run to the door and a clear getaway. Don't let any two-legs get in the way.
3. Check timing.

{list ends}

Timing is really important. The two-legs with the burger has to be lifting the bun to his mouth at the right speed and the right time. If they are then that's your moment. Your paws scrabble madly on the pavement, *whizz whizz whizz*, and you hurl yourself forward like an Outer-Space-Galaxy-Fighter-Rocket-Plane on a bombing run to blow up the Death-Star-Thingy-Whatsit – *FWWOWWWWW!*

Three bounds and you have reached top speed and now you launch yourself through the air, flying in a graceful arc and you dive right between two-leg's face and the paw with the burger. With a tiny neat twist of your head you snatch the Death-Star-Thingy-burger from his paw just before it disappears into his mouth and you're away! You land on the far side and you're off at top speed, whoosh-whizz, chomping the burger as you go. Job done. Yum yum yum!

I love doing that!

Just don't make the same mistake I did once. I waited in ambush outside a burger place. The door opened and out came a two-legs right in the act of raising the bun to his face. I ran, I jumped, I flew, I grabbed, I landed and made off chewing happily. Chomp chomp chomp! But guess what? It wasn't a burger bun at all. It was a mobile phone, and instead of a scrummy burger I had a strange voice in my mouth going 'Urrh? Is that you, Harry? Harry? Are you growling? What's that chomping noi–?'

Then the phone went dead. That was because I'd just killed it and spat it out. Splrrrrgh! Mobiles are not good to eat, I promise you. They're even worse than plastic pies.

But you can't find burger bars in the middle of nowhere. I was going to have to hunt. Maybe I'd find a rabbit that didn't mind being my breakfast. I mooched around here and I mooched around there and do you know what? I think I must have picked the only rabbit-less zone in the entire country. There wasn't a single one. I was so fed-up and miserable and my tummy was saying: *Feed me! Please feed me! There's space for an elephant in here!* And that was when the cat fell on me.

I was passing beneath a tree when there was a startled yowl from above and as I looked up a large ginger ball of fur came zonking out of the tree, bounced off my head, landed on the ground, got up and looked at me with raised eyebrows.

'Hi . . .' it began. Then it saw my teeth and my hungry smile and decided to run for its life. I decided to run for its life too. I mean, you have to if you're a dog. Cats and Dogs are ancient enemies. We chase and they run. So that's what we did.

Whoosh! I've never seen a cat run so fast! And zig and zag! Away across the field we went, with my ears streaming out behind me – I love that! – until all of a sudden the cat stopped dead, spun round, hissed, spat and lashed out with one paw and almost took my head off as I skidded to a halt.

'Whoa!' I yelled, leaping back. 'What was that for?'

'I'm fed up with running,' snarled the cat, with every single hair on its body standing up and its tail all fluffed up until it looked like a monkey puzzle tree. Bristling – that's what it was doing.

I sat down and stared at it. The cat glared back, lifted one paw, casually flicked open its claws and began to clean between them with its teeth. 'So,' drawled the cat. 'What are you going to do now, clever-clogs?'

Good point. What *was* I going to do? I opened my mouth to speak, didn't know what to say, so I shut it again. The cat grinned.

'Lost for words? That's the trouble with you dogs. You're all hurry-scurry, huff, puff and woof.' The cat's fur slowly smoothed itself and he sat back on his haunches, never taking his golden eyes off me. Unnerving, it was, I can tell you. I decided to play it casual and act as if I knew what I was doing.

'Actually, I was looking for a burger bar,' I announced. The cat fell over laughing. He wasn't meant to do that. Where was the respect? Down the drain, that's where it was.

The cat glanced round. 'A burger bar, in a field? Of course you were. Tell me, was I born an idiot, or were you born an idiot? Don't bother to answer.'

'Are you always as rude as this?' I asked tetchily.

'Only if you're as stupid as this.'

I ask you! That's no way to speak to Dazzy Donut Dog. 'Listen, chum, I could crunch up your head in one gulp.'

'You could,' agreed the cat, lying down and rolling on to its back as if it didn't much care what I did but I could rub its tummy if I liked. 'But before that happened I would probably have taken out both your eyes, shredded your nose and stuffed carrots into your ears.'

I choked. 'Why would you stuff carrots into my ears?'

'I always do,' said the cat casually. 'It's my signature. Murderers always leave a signature on the dead body. Don't you know anything? The Deadly Daffodil used to leave a daffodil next to his victim. Wanda the Weasel always left a lipstick kiss-print on her prey's cheek. I stuff carrots in their ears.'

I swallowed hard. I was in the company of a killer cat. I began to back away. The cat smiled again.

'You believe me, don't you?' it purred. 'I said you were stupid. Where on earth do you think I'm going to find carrots around here?'

'I knew you were joking,' I shouted.

'Of course you did. So then, tell me, Mr Mutt, what *are* you doing round here?'

'I'm lost. And I'm not Mr Mutt. I'm a Miss and my name's Streaker.'

The cat stretched itself slowly. 'Well, Streaker, you may call me Great Lord and Master of All Things Visible and Invisible; Emperor of the Woods, the Wilds, the Winds and Wobbly Things; Pendragon of all Hilly Bits; Sultan of Sausages; Celestial Prince of Kippers, Goldfish and Chunky Rabbit –'

'How about Moggy?' I interrupted.

'I don't think so, unless you want to see those carrots,' snapped the cat.

'I'll call you Cat.'

He eyed me for a second. 'It's a deal,' he agreed. 'I hate those names two-legs give you. I used to be called Sweety-pie.'

'Bit out of character,' I observed.

'Exactly. Have you had breakfast? No? I've got half a mouse somewhere. I'm a bit of a wanderer myself. My two-legs threw me out.'

I thought: *I'm not surprised. I've never met such a . . . such a catty cat.* I didn't say it of course. Didn't want my ears filled with carrots. I tried to sound sympathetic.

'Life must be hard,' I offered.

'I survive,' Cat said with a shrug as we wandered towards the hedge. 'But a warm home would be nice. Ah, there it is.'

He showed me the half mouse. It was the bottom half. I looked at the tail and the two back legs and I didn't feel nearly so hungry as I thought.

'It's kind of you to offer, but I'm not that fond of mice.'

Cat shrugged and gulped it down in one. 'We could head for town,' he suggested, as he cleaned his whiskers.

'Now that is a good idea. I can snaffle some food and maybe we can find out where we are and then work out how to get back home.'

'Excellent,' agreed Cat, trotting ahead of me, his tail held high. I fell in behind. I was thinking: *This is weird. I'm following a cat. It's like we're friends. I hope nobody sees. I'd be so ashamed. This isn't supposed to happen.* And then I thought: *I'm hungry.*