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opening extract from

# Jake Our Hero

written by

## Annette Butterworth

published by

## Happy Cat Books

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*For Harry*
*With lots and lots of love*
*Grandma xxx*



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# Jake
## our Hero



Written by Annette Butterworth
Illustrated by Nick Butterworth

Catnip Publishing
HAPPY CAT BOOKS

# Chapter One



Jake was excited. It was Christmas!

Jake loved Christmas time. There were lots of lovely things to eat. Boxes of chocolates would appear around the house. Jake would sneak one or two for himself, when nobody was looking. Delicious! His dinner bowl often had very nice leftovers added to it. He loved turkey, with lots of gravy. The odd roast potato was all right and he quite liked cabbage. Jake didn't like

carrots, though. He would suck the gravy off, and then leave them spread all over the floor.

Jake's owners, the Fosters, often had friends and family to stay at Christmas and Jake liked that. Everybody was always in a good mood, and Jake would be given lots of attention and lots of walks. He was usually given a lovely, juicy, giant bone. And, best of all, his friend Sam always came for Christmas dinner.

Sam was an old man who lived alone in a house at the bottom of Jake's garden. Sam took Jake for walks in the local park, and through Jake, Sam had become friends with the Fosters. He and Jake were great friends.

Sometimes it snowed at Christmas time, and Jake liked that a lot. He loved to run through deep snow, showering himself all over with it. He liked to eat it! He chased the animals in the park – they left telltale prints in the snow, so it was easy to follow them.





The most exciting thing of all though, was the Christmas party for dogs. Every year, the dog owners who used the park hired the local hall to celebrate Christmas with the dogs. The party usually took place a few days before Christmas day. The hall would be decorated with a Christmas tree and lights. The dogs would arrive, all having been bathed and looking their best. Jake thought that was the only drawback to the party. He hated the bath, but he didn't mind the twinkling bow tie that Mrs Foster tied round his neck.

The dogs had fun together. There were ball games and eating games. There was a race to

see which dogs could eat a trail of sausages the fastest. Jake's favourite game was a treasure hunt. He nearly always found most of the treats that had been carefully hidden around the hall. He was so good at it that Mrs Thirkettle had threatened to ban him from taking part, or at least make him wait a while until the other dogs had had a chance to look.

Towards the end of the party, the dog owners had a Christmas meal whilst the dogs had their food together. It was always a very happy time.

Jake couldn't wait to get to the park to see his friends. It was Christmas. And Jake was very excited.



# Chapter Two



Sam arrived to collect Jake for their walk to the park. He looked very worried.

"Whatever is the matter, Sam?" Mrs Foster asked. "What's happened?"

"You haven't heard the news?" Sam replied. "Holly has disappeared from Emily Thirkettle's garden. Emily went to call her in for the night, and she wasn't there."

Mrs Foster looked puzzled. "That's not like Holly, to escape and run away."

Sam frowned. "Emily says she thinks she has been stolen. Dognapped. She heard Jake barking but unfortunately, she didn't think to see if anything was wrong."

"That's terrible!" Mrs Foster cried.

Holly was the beautiful collie that lived next door. She was Jake's favourite dog friend.

Suddenly Jake remembered something that had happened the night before. He had just finished eating his supper and, as he strolled into the garden, he heard angry voices next door. Jake barked loudly. He didn't like the sound of the voices. As he reached the fence between the two gardens, he heard car doors slamming shut. Then he heard a car screeching away from outside Holly's house. To Jake's surprise and disappointment, Holly wasn't in her garden. Jake had felt puzzled.





"I heard them last night!" Jake thought. "I heard them stealing Holly! I wish I had done something to stop them. Where can they have taken her?"

Jake was very worried.

When Sam and Jake reached the park, the owners of the other dogs didn't make Jake feel any better. Jake listened intently as Sam chatted with Mr Grant. Mr Grant owned Charles, the Irish wolfhound, another of Jake's friends.

"I don't like it one bit," said Mr Grant. "Did you know, Sam, that Mac the Westie has gone missing now? I wouldn't be surprised if they tried to steal Charles. Mrs Thirkettle lives only two doors away from me. I will have to be extra careful. I'm very glad we are going away tomorrow. We'll be back in time for Christmas. I hope they catch the thieves before then."

Sam looked very concerned. "Yes, let's hope the police can find out what is happening, and



soon. I would hate it if Jake was stolen."

"Oh you don't need to worry about Jake, Sam. He isn't a pedigree dog. These thieves seem to know what they are after and have only stolen valuable dogs. They can probably get plenty of money for dogs like Holly and Mac. I have heard of several other pedigree dogs that seem to have disappeared in suspicious circumstances as well." Mr Grant paused and looked at Jake. "But no mongrels. Of course," he continued, "if they did steal a mongrel by mistake, they would probably get rid of it, dump it pretty quickly."

Sam was livid. "Jake may not be a pedigree, but he is the most precious thing in the world to me, and I can't bear the thought of him, or any other dog, being stolen, or 'got rid of'! What a dreadful thought!" Sam said angrily.

"I was only trying to cheer you up Sam," said Mr Grant.

"Well you could have been a bit more sensitive





about it," Mrs Thirkettle interrupted. "Can we change the subject please? I have come to the park today for some moral support, instead I am now worried that Holly could be killed! I don't feel very supported!"

Jake felt the same. He didn't know whether to feel pleased that nobody would want to steal him because he wasn't a pedigree, or offended! And it did seem that he was right, that Holly

had probably been stolen. She *was* a very beautiful collie.

"At least she won't end up being dumped." Jake thought.

He shivered. To end up lost and far away from home, seemed a terrible thing to happen to a dog. But, even worse, to be killed. Surely that couldn't happen. Could it?

"And what about Mac?" Jake thought. "He's not here either. Has he been stolen as well? This is awful!"

Mac was a West Highland white terrier and another of Jake's friends. Jake liked him a lot. He was older than Jake, but he still loved playing with a football and they had some good games together.

Jake felt very gloomy. "I might never see either of them again!" he thought.

This was such a sad thought that his excitement about Christmas vanished. The



Christmas party would be an awful time.

"Things just aren't the same without friends," Jake thought, miserably.

Jake plodded round for the rest of the walk, showing no interest in the ball when Sam kicked it for him.

"Poor old fellow," Sam said to him, "you know something isn't right, don't you? Come on, let's take you home."

That night, Jake lay awake, worrying about his friends. If they were in the hands of a gang of thieves, what might happen to them? Surely nobody would want to hurt the lovely Holly! Jake thought this seemed so cruel. Didn't these thieves have hearts at all? Didn't they care that these dogs were precious friends and companions?