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Opening extract from

Girl with a White Dog

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Published by

Catnip Publishing Ltd

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Jessie Jones 9B
Mr Hunter, English.

Write a Modern Fairy Tale

Once upon a time there were two cousins, both princesses.

Princess Fran was really pretty with golden hair and blue eyes, and she lived in a big house in the country with a huge garden and a swimming pool and a really sweet black-and-white cocker spaniel called Charlie. She went to a posh boarding school.

Princess Jessie lived in a much smaller house in a village and went to the local school. She didn't have a dog, even though she had asked for one every Christmas and birthday for as long as she could remember. Princess Jessie's hair was more brown than gold, though Princess Fran once shone a torch on it and said she could definitely see some golden glints. Which was kind, even if it wasn't true.

The princesses' grandmother lived in a house near Princess Jessie. She loved the two cousins very much and had lots of pictures of them on her walls (which they found very embarrassing). And they loved her very much too, because she was kind and loving and made delicious apple cake.

And then things went wrong.

Strangers came to the village and did jobs Princess Jessie's father could do, but for less money. And they sat at her bus stop, talking in a different language, and went about in gangs.

Princess Jessie didn't like them at all.

Her father's business went bust. He had to go abroad to work, and the bank took their house back and Princess Jessie and her mother had to go and rent a really small dark house in the village.

And it was all the strangers' fault.

Things weren't too good for Princess Fran either. Her father didn't lose his job – but everyone said he lost his mind, because he left Princess Fran and her mother and went off with someone else. That was when Princess Fran came to Jessie's school.

And so Princess Jessie made three wishes.

1) To have her father home again

2) To stop living in the horrible dark house

3) To have a dog (because she had always wanted one – and still did)

Having all those wishes come true would be her happy ending.

I don't know what wishes Princess Fran made. She doesn't really talk to me that much any more.



My name is Jessie Jones. Mr Hunter, our English teacher, told us to write our own fairy tale. That was my first go. I've always loved fairy tales and I couldn't wait to start writing one.

I knew that a lot of fairy tales don't start very well. There's often something sad, like someone dying, or being lost, or losing their home, before it all comes right and the wishes come true. That made sense to me. It was the perfect homework.

You see, at the beginning of this story, I really did have three wishes. It was easy to imagine that having them all come true at once would be my happy ending. I just didn't realise how sad the beginning would have to be.

Chapter One

We went to Gran's as usual after school on Thursday. I rang the doorbell, and I was sure I could hear barking, which was weird as Gran didn't have a dog. She opened the door with a big smile, but I could see she was disappointed there were only two of us.

'Hello Jessie, hello Kate!' she said. 'Is Francesca not coming again?'

'No, I think she's got a rehearsal or something,' I lied, because I couldn't face telling Gran that her other granddaughter preferred to catch the bus into town after school and hang around with her really annoying friends rather than visit our grandmother. (Who was just as lovely as she had always been. It wasn't Gran who had changed.)

'Oh dear, what a shame,' said Gran, looking sad, but then she hid it behind another big smile.

'Anyway, it's lovely to see you both. Come along inside. I've got a surprise to show you.'

Gran turned and brought Kate and me through the

sitting room, past the millions of framed photographs of me and Fran and the rest of our family on the walls and on the mantelpiece, into her spotless kitchen. There, in a little dog pen, looking out at us with huge dark eyes, was the most beautiful puppy you have ever seen. Seriously cute. He looked like a tiny, snow-white wolf, but with ears that were too big for him and an extremely waggy tail. He was whining and scrabbling at the door, his tail wagging, desperate to get out and see us. Gran opened the door and he ran straight to Kate's wheelchair. He put his paws on her foot rest and she bent down and picked him up.

'Gran – he's adorable!' I said. 'Where did you get him?'

'His name is Snowy,' said Gran, ignoring my question.

I couldn't believe it. It was the best thing *ever*. After a really rubbish year, one of my biggest wishes in life was coming true. I had asked for a dog on my Christmas list from the time that I could write. Every birthday I asked for a puppy – and every birthday Mum and Dad smiled and said 'maybe when you're older' or, more recently, with more frowns and sighs than smiles, 'dogs cost a lot to keep, Jessie'. When Dad lost his job I thought that my chance of ever getting one was finally over. And now Snowy was here – practically mine. It was like Gran was my grandmother and my fairy godmother all at the same time. Definitely a wish come true.

'We must take good care of him, you and Kate and

Francesca and me,' she said. 'I'll need lots of help. There is so much to do in the garden. I don't know where to start.'

Kate and I looked out at the garden. It was beautiful. Neil from Gran's church came twice a week to do it. There was a smooth green lawn, flower beds and a summer house at the end. I loved the white roses climbing over the walls, and the little fountain. What was Gran talking about? It was perfect – like something in a magazine.

'It looks lovely, Gran. Are you worried the puppy will spoil it?'

She looked back at me and her face changed. She looked . . . I think the best word is *frightened*.

She said, 'No, we have no place to hide them, Jessie. What are we going to do?'

'Who, Gran?'

'I didn't want Snowy shot. I don't want any of them shot. This time will be different. We'll make sure of that, won't we, Jess?'

I didn't know what to say. Who had wanted to shoot Snowy? What was Gran talking about?

'Gran,' I started, and I could hear my voice coming out all panicky, but Kate suddenly passed me the squirming, wriggling puppy and shook her head at me.

'I love your cakes, Mrs Jones,' said Kate, really quickly. 'You must give me the recipe for that chocolate one you make.' Kate can be very charming when she wants to be and she *is* great at cooking, so Gran started talking

baking and, as if by magic, changed back into the calm, efficient Gran I knew. Relieved, I looked down at Snowy. I couldn't believe that I was holding a real, live puppy in my arms at last.

The rest of the evening went well. We ate Gran's delicious shepherd's pie for dinner, followed by her yummy apple crumble and custard. And it's amazing how busy you are with a puppy around, putting him in and out the garden so he doesn't have an accident on the carpet (and mopping up when he does). Gran was her usual self and I could have believed all the stuff about shooting dogs was in my imagination, if it hadn't been for Kate being there. Once Kate hears something, she never forgets it.

Then Gran said we could take Snowy with us to Kate's house to show her mum. So we loaded up Kate's wheelchair and we sat in the back. Kate held Snowy in a blanket on her lap, all curled up in a sleepy little heap. We were so busy admiring Snowy and stroking his soft fur and smelling his sweet puppy smell that we weren't paying attention to where we were going – we never usually needed to as Gran had driven Kate the short trip home loads of times.

I suddenly looked up and noticed we were on the motorway. We should have been going down the pretty country lanes near Kate's house, not passing lorries.

I leaned forward to get Gran's attention.

'Gran, why are we on the motorway?' I asked.

I could see her give a start as she realised where she was.

'Jess. I don't know. What do I do now?' she asked.

I think those were the scariest words I'd ever heard. I thought for a minute she'd forgotten how to drive, but she hadn't. She knew how to drive, she just didn't know where she was going. Kate, as usual, knew exactly what to do.

'Mrs Jones, you can take the next exit. It's just coming up now.'

Gran indicated and we left the motorway, heading for Oaksham, a market town about a twenty-minute bus ride away from the village. It was a relief to get away from those lorries, but it was still very frightening. Gran was driving very slowly and her face looked as if she was having to concentrate really hard to listen to Kate's directions. Eventually we saw Oaksham Sports' Centre.

'Ah, good, this is where I go to do sitting volleyball,' Kate said, really chattily, as if it was the most normal thing that we were going there now, at eight o'clock on a Monday night. 'Just turn in here, Mrs Jones – it's the sports centre car park and I've texted my mum that we're going to be here.'

Gran drove in and parked and, as she switched off the ignition, we all breathed a big sigh of relief. Then she put her head in her hands.

I rushed out of the car and round to the driver's seat and put my arms around her. Gran was shaking.

'I don't think I can drive you home, Jess. I'm so sorry,' she said. 'Everything has just gone blank in my mind. It's like a fog.'

'It's OK,' Kate said from the back. 'Mum is coming for me and she's bringing Jessie's mum. She'll drive you both home.'

I sat with my arms around Gran. Her face was so tired and, somehow, young. Suddenly I had a glimpse of her as a terrified little girl. She looked into my eyes like she was trying to find an answer and shook her head as if she couldn't quite believe what was happening. I held Gran's hand and I stroked her hair. I couldn't think what else to do.