

# ANIMAL BOY

## Chapter 6

Beep! Beep! Beep! Josh's alarm signalled a new day. He reached over to switch it off. He was still feeling very tired. Getting up, he yawned as he looked at his reflection in the mirror. And that's when they hit him, the events of the last few days. Ellie's hamster, Miss Chang's goldfish, the cats.

"Oh no," he said out loud.

He now knew that it hadn't all just been a bad dream. He could understand animals and they could understand him.

"Josh, hurry up or you're going to be late for school!" cried his mum from downstairs.

Josh turned to look out of his window. The tree branch was empty again but he knew they were out there, watching his every move.

He quickly got changed into his school uniform and ran downstairs for breakfast. His little sister was munching her way through her last piece of toast.

"How are you feeling today, Josh?" asked his mum as she walked over to him with a couple of slices.

"Erm, good, Mum. I think," he replied.

"Hey, lady!" a squeaky voice shouted. "Are you going to share that toast? I'm starving in here."

Josh's eyes grew wide as he looked over at the kitchen counter. It was Gizmo the hamster again. He was pacing up and down his cage and doing the occasional backflip off the cage bars.

"Ellie," Josh whispered, "Gizmo would like your last bit of toast if that's OK?"

She turned to see the little hamster with his furry face pressed up against the side of the cage. He had one of his little paws outstretched through the bars.

"Does Gizmo want a little piece of toast?" Ellie said in a baby voice as she popped a piece of crust through the gap in the bars.

"Finally!" Gizmo shouted. "Nom, nom, nom!"

Josh drank his juice in three large gulps and grabbed his toast. "Got to run, Mum!" he shouted. "I need to get to school a little earlier for something."

"OK, dear," his mum called back. "Have a great day!"

On his way down the street, Josh could again feel the presence of someone, or something. He heard a rustle from behind a bin. “Who’s there?” he shouted. “I know someone is there!”

Fluffy, the fat cat from the ally, padded out in front of him.

“Where are you off to in such a hurry?” Fluffy asked. “Aren’t you supposed to be grabbing us the biggest, juiciest fish you can find from the supermarket?”

“OK, OK,” Josh said, “but I have to be quick or I’ll be late for school.”

The cats watched Josh march into the supermarket and appear five minutes later with a plastic bag in his hand. He quickly dashed around the corner, the group of cats following closely behind.

Josh pulled out the wrapped-up fish from the plastic bag. “Here,” he said as he quickly unbundled the huge fish. “This was the biggest one they had.”



“Yummy, yum!” went Fluffy as he pounced on it. The other cats quickly piled in, too. They were like a school of piranhas, finishing off the fish in seconds.

Josh couldn’t believe how greedy they were. “Right. I need to go to school. Don’t you lot follow me. I need to try and concentrate today and I can’t be having any weird cat distractions.”

Fluffy looked up at Josh, licking his lips with a very satisfied look on his face. “No problem. Have a great day at school. We will see you afterwards.”

The pack of cats all looked up and laughed. Josh turned and hurried on to school so he wouldn’t miss registration.

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The afternoon was the same. Fluffy and a few of his followers waited for Josh to leave school and demanded he buy them all another fish.

“I can’t keep buying you fish!” Josh shouted. “I am going to run out of pocket money.”

Fluffy did not look impressed. “You will buy us fish... or else,” he hissed.

“Or else what?” asked Josh. “You guys don’t scare me. I could just ask a bunch of dogs to follow me and they would soon sort you lot out.”

The fat cat looked nervous and stepped back. “OK, OK. There’s no need to get the dogs involved.” Fluffy sat there and thought for a moment. “Look, kid. We like you. I’ll tell you what. If you need anything, you come to Fluffy. I’ll see if we can help you out,” he said with a grin. “You scratch our backs and we’ll scratch yours.”

With that offer, Fluffy and the rest of the cats turned and ran down the street like a streak of mini tigers.

Josh shook his head. “Yeah, right, I scratch their backs and they’ll scratch mine,” he said to himself.

Just then, a laugh came from the other side of the street. It was Dave.

“Ha! Look at Josh!” He laughed. “Talking to himself in the middle of the street!”



Josh exchanged an angry look with him. Then a flash of an idea entered his head. A grin started to appear across his face.

“I scratch their backs and they’ll scratch mine,” he whispered.