

ANIMAL BOY

Chapter 7

The morning started off very much the same as yesterday. Fluffy had made sure that he and his gang bumped into Josh on his way to school. And once again, Fluffy insisted that Josh go buy another fish for them all.

Josh was happy to play along and went to the supermarket for the third time in 24 hours. He asked for the biggest fish they had at the counter.

The lady behind the counter looked at him with a suspicious expression on her face. “Weren’t you in here twice yesterday?” she asked with a raised eyebrow. “You bought the two largest fish we had on display.”



“Yeah,” Josh said. “My family really likes fish.” He turned and made his way swiftly to the checkouts. He knew he couldn’t keep this up. He had already spent all this week’s pocket money *and* lunch money on Fluffy and his fish banquets. It was time for Josh to get something from this deal.

Josh headed round the side of the supermarket, where he was greeted by a small army of cats. Waiting. All licking their lips. Fluffy strode up to him. “Do you have something for us, human?”

Josh pulled out the fish from his school bag. “I do have a little something for you,” he said with a smile.

“Yum, yum, yum!” cried out Fluffy as he swiped at the package. The other cats joined in, ripping the wrapping off with their sharp claws.

Josh looked down at them with a nervous smile. He thought now was his chance to ask for his favour. “OK, so that’s your breakfast dealt with. Can I now ask for that favour you promised me?”

The cats ignored him. They were too busy feasting on the fish.

“Hey, Fluffy!” he called. “Now I’d like to ask you for that favour.”

Fluffy and the other cats looked up at him, a sea of eyes. Josh started to sweat again. “It’s just a small favour. I’ll fetch you another great big fish after you have done it for me.”

Fluffy’s one good tiger-like eye lit up. “What is it you want?” he asked.

Josh bent down to the cat’s level and whispered into his ear.

“Yes, yes,” Fluffy said, nodding his head solemnly.

As Josh whispered more into Fluffy’s twitching ear, all the other cats were surprised to see Fluffy laugh hysterically.

“Very good! Ha, ha, ha!” Fluffy roared, beating his paw against the floor. “I am sure we can help you there!” He turned to face Josh, their faces close enough to touch. “You scratch our backs and we’ll scratch yours,” he said with a wink.

Josh was not bothered once on his way to school the next day. The early morning sun was shining and Josh was grinning like the Cheshire cat from *Alice in Wonderland*. He was heading towards the school gates.

Dave and his two best friends were already gathered there, waiting for him. Dave had told them about ‘Sweetcorn Head’ talking to himself in the middle of the street.

“There he is!” shouted Dave. “Crazy Josh! I caught him talking to himself in the street yesterday, boys. I think that sweetcorn helmet of his mustn’t have done its job!”

Josh stared hard at Dave. “I will give you one chance to say you’re sorry or else.”

Dave walked over to Josh with a hard look on his face and his fists clenched. “Or else what?”

Josh stepped back. “This is your last chance.”

It seemed that the whole school was now watching Dave and Josh. They were wondering what Josh was up to. No one stood up to Dave. There was no chance he was going to come out of this without a black eye or a bloody nose at least.

“OK, then, let’s see what you’ve got,” Dave said with a chuckle.

Everyone in the playground fell silent. All eyes were on the two boys. Josh slowly looked round at everyone who was watching. He had an eerie grin on his face. They had no idea what he had up his sleeve. It was time to let the cat, or cats, out of the bag.

Josh puffed out his chest and gave out the loudest meow he could. “MEOOOOOOW!”

Suddenly, hundreds of cats poured through the school gates and headed straight for Dave.

Dave’s friends fled instantly, leaving Dave alone, frozen to the spot as his eyes widened at the sight of hundreds of cats heading in his direction. Everyone else stood with their mouths gaping in disbelief.

Josh heard a mini roar coming from the top of the school gate. He could make out the large figure of a fat cat against the bright morning sun. It was Fluffy. He was ordering his followers to chase Dave.

Wave upon wave of cats burst through into the playground.

“Arghhhh!” screamed Dave as he ran around the playground, pushing his fellow pupils out of the way. “Somebody help me!”

The cats were swiping their claws at his heels. He headed for the school entrance and sprinted down the main corridor.

The teachers in the staffroom could hear Dave’s screams, as well as the stampede of cats hurrying after him. They piled out into the corridor, spilling their coffee as they tried to figure out what was going on.

The headmaster, Mr Jones, pushed his way to the front. He couldn’t believe the stream of cats pouring in. He could see Dave running out of a classroom and into the dining room. Cats of all shapes and sizes were jumping and running everywhere, causing chaos. They were knocking over chairs, books and tables in their pursuit.

“David Dawson! What on earth do you think you are doing?” Mr Jones shouted, his face turning red with anger. “Stop this at once!”

Dave turned and headed towards the headmaster. “I can’t, Sir! They’re after me!” he screamed.

All the pupils outside were now peering in through the windows, watching the mayhem that was unfolding inside.

Dave was heading right for the staffroom. He couldn’t stop and crashed straight into Mr Jones and the rest of the teachers. It was a mad, confused pile of teachers, registers and spilt coffee.

Suddenly, a loud meow could be heard again from the top of the school gate. It cut through the air like a fighter jet flying overhead. Instantly, all the other cats stopped in their tracks. Fluffy was calling off his cat army. He thought that Dave had had enough for one morning.

The cats streamed out of the school, through the playground and out of the school gates, whistling past Josh and his bemused fellow students.

The playground burst into a chorus of cheering and laughter. They started to chant Josh’s name.



“Josh! Josh! Josh!”

Josh looked up at the school gates and struck a heroic pose. “Thanks for scratching my back, Fluffy!” he called as he gave the fat cat a wink.

Fluffy looked down at Josh with his good eye. “Any time, kid. Now, don’t forget. We want the biggest fish you can find after school. We’ll be waiting.”