

It's the Cat's Fault

Hank the Rescue Dog - Book Two

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*To my first great-grandson, Milo Rey.
You are precious and a joy to all your family.
I love you, and Jesus loves you more.*

THE INTRUDER



I discovered the intruder at approximately eight o'clock Saturday morning. My boy, Kaden, and I stayed up late the night before playing an amazing new game on Xbox. Actually, Kaden gamed, and I got in a little extra snoozing on the bed. But this morning, he slept in while I waited for him to go upstairs with me.

He let me outside to do my business. I always take a spin around the perimeter of my yard to make sure nothing is out of place. I barked at a bird in the maple tree. Mrs. Wilson, the neighbor next door, took out her garbage, and I wondered what lovely things it contained.

My super-smelling nose detected the faint odor of chicken bones. Yummm. I poked my nose into the loose leaves under the prickly-stemmed bush in the corner. I nearly jumped out of my fur when the bush let out a “Hiiiiissss.” Kind of like when Kaden’s bike tire went flat. I used my sniffing abilities to investigate further.

What? This smells like ... When I poked my nose around the bush, I saw ... a *cat*. It was all bunched up like something

was seriously wrong with its back, and it had a nasty expression on its face. The monstrosity clearly wanted me to leave my own yard.

I immediately sounded the alert. I barked at full volume, letting everyone inside know that I'd cornered an intruder and needed a little backup.

The back door flew open. "Hank! Hush. It's too early for that on a Saturday." I glanced at Dad and continued barking.

Kaden stepped out onto the deck, still in pajama pants with his hair sticking out everywhere. He peered down at me. "I think he found something under the rosebush." He padded down the stairs on his bare feet.

"Kaden, wait. If he's cornered a wild critter, I want you to stay away." The steps creaked as Dad followed him.

Kaden reached me first. He squatted and peered under the foliage. "It's a cat."

What is wrong with people's ears? Can't they understand *Bark*? I'd been speaking it for ten minutes. What would Kaden do? Apprehend the thing, of course, and then throw it over the fence? It might find its way back in. Maybe we could put it in a box and toss it in the garbage? Or we could take it to the shelter where Kaden found me. They have lots of cages there. Lock it in a cage where it would never bother any of us again.

Kaden gave me a rude shove. "Move back, Hank." He reached out his arm and pulled the thing from under the bush. "Ouch!" he yelped.

The despicable varmint scratched my boy. A low growl started in my throat. *Give it to me. I'll bite its head off. I'll tear it to bits. I'll ...*

But no. Kaden held it close to his chest and petted it. "It's just a kitten. How did it get in here?" He stood as Dad approached.

“Cute little thing.” Dad stretched out a finger to touch it, but the evil creature only leaned in closer to my boy.

“Bring it inside, and we’ll figure out what to do with it.” Dad led the way to the house, Kaden followed, holding the horrible pest, and I padded behind, pretty much forgotten.

Inside, the kitchen burst into chaos. The Girl leaped from her chair, bumping the table and splashing milk from her bowl. “Oh, a kitten!”

I veered around her chair and attempted to lap up the milk now dripping onto the floor.

“Hank!” Mom caught me by the collar and led me out of the kitchen, shouting over her shoulder, “Kaden, don’t bring that animal in here. It’s probably sick.”

“It’s just a kitten, Mom.” Kaden handed the ugly creature over to The Girl and pulled a bowl from the cupboard.

“Wash your hands,” Mom told Kaden as she reached out and stroked the animal’s back. It snuggled down into The Girl’s arms like it planned to live there the rest of its life.

The Girl moved to the couch and stretched out her legs on the ottoman. “Can we keep her?”

“Absolutely not, Sloane. We have Hank, and he is more than enough pet for this family.” Mom shook the cloth she’d wiped the table with into the sink.

I sat back with a smile. *Of course I am more than enough.*

“But Hank is Kaden’s dog. A cat would be for me.” The Girl cupped a hand around the mangy thing.

Dad retrieved his coffee cup from the counter and sat in his recliner. “I’m betting he belongs somewhere in the neighborhood. Kaden, why don’t you finish breakfast, get dressed, then knock on some doors and see if you can find where he came from?”

“Sure thing, Dad. Hank and I are going to the park to shoot

hoops. I'll ask the neighbors before I head over there." Kaden slurped up the last of the milk from his cereal bowl.

Would he remember? Yes! A tiny dribble splashed into my dish before he put the bowl in the dishwasher. Then we thundered down the steps to our room.

Almost a year had passed since Kaden found me in the shelter. He wasn't sure about having a dog at first, but I won him over. We started working together on coping with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Kaden does pretty well—most of the time. And I do great. Except when I forget.

Kaden pulled on his basketball shorts, and that made me so happy I snatched a Kaden-thing and raced upstairs with it. Kaden grabbed his shirt and basketball shoes and thundered after me. I let him chase me around the table until Mom hollered, "You two stop that. You're scaring the kitten."

The Girl sat up. "Why does Hank have your underwear? Eww."

I dropped the Kaden-thing, and he scooped it up and tossed it through the doorway of the laundry room.

"I'll be back by lunchtime," Kaden said over his shoulder as he fastened the leash to my collar and ran to grab his basketball from the mudroom.

"Don't forget to go to all the surrounding houses. The ones behind us too." Dad looked up from his phone. Probably reading the news. He liked to read news clips out loud to us so we'd know what was going on in the world. *I used my nose for that.*

When Kaden and I stepped outside, I sniffed the air. Hmm. Like right here in front of the house. I smelled where the kitten had been but, as smart as Kaden was, he couldn't figure it out when I tried to tell him something my nose told me.

"Come on, Hank." He pulled me toward the neighbor's

house, then knocked on the door while I sniffed the bushes crowding the step.

Mrs. Wilson opened the door. "Good morning, Kaden. What can I do for you?" As I pushed my nose closer, she shut the door, leaving only a tiny crack.

"We found an orange kitten in our backyard, and I'm looking for the owner. Did you lose a kitten?"

"Heavens, no. Roger is allergic."

"Okay, thanks. Let us know if you hear of someone who lost one."

"I will," she said as the crack disappeared and she shut the inside door.

We visited five more houses. No one had lost a kitten, and it didn't appear that anyone wanted one. Certainly not me. Kaden gave me a pat and headed for the sidewalk at a jog. This was more like it.

When we reached the park, Liam was already there shooting baskets. Kaden opened the door in the fence surrounding the court. Liam dropped his basketball to give me some pats and scratchies while Kaden closed the door.

"Have you signed up for basketball?" Liam asked Kaden.

"Are they taking registrations now? I'll tell my dad. It would be awesome if we were on the same team again."

The boys picked up their basketballs, and shooting began in earnest. I did my rebounding trick, tipping the balls toward the boys with my nose.

I am much more than a pretty face.