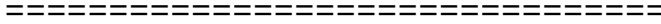


## Rocky Returns



### **(From the adventures of a Jackabee)**

Rocky arrived from the plane to a big welcome. Betsy was first to see him.

“What happened? Where were you? We searched everywhere for you!” She asked all the questions without taking a breath. “Well, answer me Rocky, we were all so worried about you.”

“I will if you give me a chance,” replied Rocky. “I was locked up in a French dog kennel. One morning, many weeks later, a man who worked for the Queen recognised me. He was shocked, and had me freed immediately and brought me to the airport. Now I’m home again thanks to him. The whole problem was due to the cat at the swimming pool!” Rocky went on angrily, “I really, really hate cats.”

“Huh,” muttered Betsy, “Cats are smarter, and can run faster than you. That’s why you don’t like them.”

“Maybe so,” growled Rocky, “But someday I will catch one and teach him a lesson. Where are Mal and Mue?” Rocky asked.

“Here we are,” shouted a voice from the crowd. It was Mue. Mal added, “Come on Rocky. We missed you a lot. Never go chasing cats again because you will always be the one who’ll end up in trouble. Let’s go home now and have your favourite dish of sausages.”

After the crowd welcomed Rocky with shouts of “Hurray, Hurray for Rocky,” they all finally started for home. Rocky was glad, he had had enough excitement for one day.

That evening, after dinner they talked for ages about everything that had happened. Around ten o’clock Betsy and Rocky headed off to their kennels for a good night’s sleep. Rocky

wanted to see some of his old friends early next morning.

Next morning Betsy was first up. It was such a beautiful day she decided to take a stroll on the beach before breakfast.

Rocky heard her sneak out but felt too lazy to follow. Eventually he pulled himself out from under his blanket and got up on to his paws. They were in the apartment at Whitehead. From the balcony Rocky had a super view of the stony beach. He loved it here just as much as he did at Castlerock, where Mal and Mue had their caravan. The beach at Castlerock was long and sandy, perfect for running and chasing a ball. At Whitehead Rocky could investigate all the rock pools, nooks and crannies. He searched for stranded fish or crabs. These made a lovely dinner. To Rocky it was all good fun.

While he looked down towards the beach he spotted Betsy running and jumping on the rocks.

“Oh she’s having great fun,” he thought. Then he noticed she was limping a little. She had hurt her back leg. He was horrified to spy two rough looking men chasing her. One of them carried what looked like a large fishing net. The men were chasing Betsy and were catching up fast. Rocky dived from the balcony, although it was really high off the ground. He rolled over in the grass, thankfully not breaking any bones, and started to dash to the beach to help Betsy. As he got closer he heard Betsy barking,

“Let me go, let me go!” The men must have caught her Rocky thought. He ran as fast as he could, jumping over rocks and streams until he reached the beach. He saw the men but could not see Betsy anywhere. He could hear her moaning with fear. Rocky ran straight at the men, who looked very surprised when they saw this dog growling and chasing them at full speed. Rocky jumped on one of the men and sunk his teeth into his arm. The man screamed with pain. The other man was too

quick for Rocky. He threw the net over him and got him trapped in it. Rocky fought to get himself free but just ended up more and more tangled in the net.

“Look what you did to me!” shouted the man who had been bitten. His arm was still bleeding.

“You are lucky I missed your head,” barked Rocky, who was now being thrown into a sack. Betsy, he discovered was in another sack, tied and left on the beach. Rocky had counted that there were six sacks all together. He wondered if each one held a kidnapped dog.

“That’s it for today Sam,” he heard one man say to the other.

“Yes Pete. We should get lots of money for this lot, especially the cheeky one that bit me!”

“Rocky,” barked Betsy.

“Betsy, where are you?”

“I don’t know. I am in a dark place and I am really frightened. Please help me Rocky.” He then heard other noises. Other dogs were barking and whimpering and he heard a cat meowing.

“What is going on here?” Rocky barked, “We don’t know,” the others barked back. Rocky, for the first time in his life, felt frightened too. He couldn’t get out of this black bag and now he could feel himself being carried along.

He felt a thump as his bag was thrown down someplace. He heard the others yelp as they were dumped too.

“Don’t be so rough Sam!” said Pete, “We don’t want to harm these animals. We need to get as much money as we can for them when we reach the port.”

“So that’s what they do,” thought Rocky “They steal dogs to sell them to the sailors at the port, then they take the cats to catch the mice

on their ships. Why would sailors want dogs? Were they going to sell us? Maybe they needed pets, or for us to help catch the cats on board ship. No!" he thought, "That would be silly. Bring cats to catch mice, and then dogs to catch the cats!" Rocky started to laugh a little, but then quickly stopped. "What am I laughing at? This is a very serious business. Maybe they want us to fight. That's what the old pirates did many years ago when they had dogs on board. OH NO," he shouted, "The old pirates also brought dogs on to their ships to eat. The pirates ate anything, and they loved dog meat. That's it! We will be stew for dinner!"

Rocky could now feel the boat rocking as it was heading out to sea. It was only a small rowing boat, and it rolled violently from side to side crashing over the waves.

"Come on. Row faster Pete," shouted Sam, "The ship will be leaving soon and we had better not miss it. I want my money."

They travelled for about two hours on the rough sea. All the dogs were sick, including Rocky. He liked swimming in the sea, but did not like sailing in a boat, especially a small one like this.

Suddenly the little boat stopped.

“There is Fat nose. He’s talking to Peg leg.” Rocky heard Pete say.

“Right, let’s get these dogs handed over and into the ship, so we can collect our money.” The dogs felt themselves being trailed along a pier. When they reached the ship they heard four men talking.

“Ok, ok,” said one of the men, “I’ll give you one pound each for them. I hope they are all dogs this time, no cats. You fooled me last time.”

“No, no,” promised Sam, “We wouldn’t do that again Peg Leg. These are all dogs. Be careful though, one of them is very cheeky. He bit me on the arm as I was catching him. I want more money for that one.”



“Get out of here!” shouted Fat nose. He did indeed have a very fat nose, as he had been a boxer years ago, and had been punched on it many times.

The dogs were transferred from the sacks into dirty cages and loaded onto the container ship. Rocky heard one man saying that the ship was going to Africa, and it would take about two weeks to get there. The man also said that these dogs would fetch good money when they got to Africa.

Rocky wondered what they were going to be used for in Africa.

When the ship set sail that night Peg-Leg came down into the hold. The dogs could hear him coming along the boards, with his wooden leg. It went stomp, step, stomp, step, which sounded quite scary. Peg-Leg had some meat with him and threw it into the cages. There were four dogs to each cage and Rocky counted ten cages altogether. Betsy was in another cage at the far end of their prison.



They could just about see each other and no more.

Rocky looked out for the cat but couldn't see it anywhere. It certainly wasn't with any of the dogs, because they might have eaten it.

There was only one piece of meat thrown into each cage. The dogs would have to fight among each other to get some. Old Peg-Leg and Fat Nose watched and laughed at them trying to get food. Rocky thought they were very bad men indeed. Someday, if he could get free, he would hand them over to the police.

In Rocky's cage there were three other dogs. One was a lady poodle; the other two were very well mannered mongrels.

The three dogs agreed to let the lady have the first piece of meat before they divided the rest into three parts so that each dog got some food.

They felt the ship sail and after two days at sea the dogs were all getting to know each other.

"Have you any plans about getting out of here?" the other dogs asked Rocky.

"Yes I have indeed. If I could reach that rope on top of the cage I could chew through it, but it's much too high for me."

"Well, stand on my back," the poodle offered.

"Gosh you are brave little dog," said Rocky, "But even that wouldn't be high enough."

Then one of the mongrels called Rascal barked,

“Let the poodle stand on my back and you climb on hers”.

“Good idea, but it may take all of us!”

“Right, I will climb up too. Maybe then we can reach it,” suggested the other dog called Pepper.

They all jumped onto each other’s back. Rocky climbed to the top and stood up on his hind legs, but he was still about one metre short. He jumped back down.

“It’s no good. We’re stuck here,” he barked sadly.

Later that night Rocky woke to the sound of a cat meowing. He opened one eye and saw the cat that the men had caught sitting outside the cage.

“What do you want?” growled Rocky, “Have you come to laugh at us trapped in here? If I could get out I would chase you. I hate cats.

Go away! Wait, don't," Rocky changed his mind, "How did you get out?"

"I didn't have to get out," said the cat. "Those horrible men threw me overboard when they saw I was a cat, but I held on to the ropes and climbed back in again because I hate water and I can't swim."

"Well, what do you want me for?" asked Rocky rudely.

"There's nothing I want. It's you who needs help."

"What can a cat do for me?" Rocky growled.

"Do you want to be free or not?" asked the cat.

"Of course I do! But what can you do that I can't?" Rocky was a little bit more civil this time.

"I am willing to climb up on top of your cage and bite through the rope. While I hold it you can all go free."

“Why do you want to do this for us?” asked Rocky

“All I want is for you to take me on your back when you are free.”

“I don’t believe this. I am the famous cat hating Rocky and you want me to swim with you on my back? I think I’m going crazy, or maybe you are,” barked Rocky

“Well”, said the cat, “If you don’t help me I won’t help either. You can stay here until you get to Africa and see what happens there. I have heard that they boil all dogs to make glue in Africa,” continued the cat. Who was just making it up to scare Rocky.

“I don’t think I want to find out what they will do to us there,” barked Rocky. “Right you win. I won’t let you drown if you can get us out of here. But once we reach land I will probably chase you like any other cat,” Rocky warned.

The cat climbed up the side of the cage. It was easy for her with such sharp claws. She

reached the thick rope and started to chew through it. In no time at all the rope snapped and the door flew open. She then cut through every other rope until all the dogs were free.

“Well done!” cheered all the other dogs, “You will be our friend forever.”

They had to wait until morning before their escape. There was a heavy door into the room where the dogs were kept. They heard old Peg-Leg coming to feed them. Everyone kept very quiet until he opened the door. Suddenly all the dogs charged him at once. Peg-Leg fell backwards as the dogs ran over him. Rocky looked for Fat Nose and jumped straight to him, knocking him overboard. He looked around and there was Peg-Leg jumping off the edge of the ship, six angry dogs snapping at his bottom. The rest of the crew soon followed. They were terrified of all these crazy dogs now running madly around the ship.

With no one left to steer the ship it soon got off course and hit a rock. Slowly it began to sink!

“Now what will we do?” cried Poodle, “We are at sea, and none of us can swim far enough to make it to the shore?”

“Where is that cat?” shouted Rocky.

“I’m here, right behind you.”

“Well, we need your help again. Look up. Do you see those life boats tied up above us? You have to climb up that rope and cut them down with your sharp teeth.”

“Aye, Aye, Captain,” shouted the cat, as she ran towards the ropes. She climbed up quickly because she could see the ship was now sinking fast. The water was coming over the bow and beginning to cover Rocky’s paws.

“Come on, Come on hurry. The whole ship is going under water!”



With a loud splash one of the lifeboats hit the sea.

“Get in fast,” Rocky shouted to the dogs. Twenty dogs jumped in as soon as the lifeboat started to rock on the waves. BANG. The second boat came crashing down. Rocky was last to leave the ship, because that’s what all good captains do. He made sure every dog was safely onboard the lifeboats before he took the cat on his back and swam towards the last boat. It was already floating out to sea.

It was then Rocky spied Betsy sitting trembling behind the others. She was thrilled to see Rocky, because she had heard his voice lots of times, but had been too weak to call him. Rocky was so happy to know she was safe he couldn’t stop smiling doggy smiles and wagging his tail madly.

“I’ll look after you now. First, I must help the rest of our friends. No one knows what to do except me,” he boasted.

The dogs didn't know how to row the boats. They just had to wait until their lifeboats came close to land - wherever that might be.

Days passed and the dogs were getting very hungry. Some of them were looking at the cat in a strange way, but Rocky warned, them with one stern bark,

“Do not to even think of eating the cat.” As she was now Rocky's friend!

“Let's try fishing,” suggested Rocky. “I used to do that at home sometimes.” He jumped over the side of the boat, and soon came back with a large fish in his mouth. The other dogs were all going to share it, but Rocky told them firmly that this fish was between Betsy, himself, and the cat.

“By the way,” asked Rocky, “I can't keep calling you “the cat,” what is your name?”  
“My name is Rocky too,” answered the cat. Rocky looked at him in disgust, growling to himself,

“Such a shame and disgrace that a cat should be called Rocky, just like me. Oh no! What else can happen?” Out loud he announced,

“I will call you Corky the cat. There is only one Rocky, and that’s ME.”

The dogs all survived by catching and eating fish. After another week at sea they spotted land ahead. The boats would have floated past the island, so Rocky shouted,

“From now on we will have to swim, or we will all be out to sea again.”

He allowed Corky the cat to climb on his back, and jumped overboard first. Betsy followed, and was able to stay close beside him, as she was also a good swimmer. The other dogs swam behind. What a shock the residents got. From the shore they saw forty dogs and a cat all swimming towards them. They all ran to hide in their houses, thinking they were being invaded by some gang of enemy dogs, lead by a cat! As Rocky and Betsy

reached the sandy beach they looked at each other in amazement. They both instantly recognised where they were. It was Castlerock beach! That's where they had spent some time in the caravan with Mal and Mue. They just could not believe their luck.

"Come on boys." Rocky barked, "I know how to get home from here." It took another two days before they finally reached Whitehead. All the dogs thanked Rocky, Betsy and the cat - now called Corky.

"We still have a score to settle," barked Rocky to Betsy.

"That's true," agreed Betsy, "Let's see if those two rogues are on the beach again."

Rocky, Betsy and Corky went down to the beach, and sure enough the two of them were there with four more bags of dogs.

"I'm going to bite their heads off!" growled Rocky.

“No, I have a better idea,” Corky announced. She told the other two what she planned to do and they both laughed and agreed.

They let some time pass while Corky rounded up all the dogs again. Rocky and Betsy barked as loudly as they could. That was the signal for all the other dogs to come running from the bushes. The forty dogs ran barking and growling at the two kidnappers. Terrified, the men dropped the sacks and sprinted towards the boat. They both jumped in and rowed out to sea as fast as they could. What they didn't realise, until it was too late, was that there was now a hole in their boat!

Corky had managed to scratch a small hole in the bottom of the boat while it was on the sand. This allowed the two rogues, Pete and Sam, just enough time to get out to sea before the boat filled with water.

“We are sinking,” shouted the pair, as their boat disappeared out of sight.



“We will have to swim out to sea because we dare not go back to all those angry dogs waiting to eat us.”

“I think we should find another job Pete,” said Sam. “This one is far too dangerous.”

Rocky, Betsy, Corky, and all the other dogs laughed and laughed until their sides were sore.

“I think we have seen the last of those two,” said Rocky.

“That’s true. They had better not come back to Whitehead ever again.” the rest barked together.

“Now I feel starving,” cried Rocky, “Come on Betsy and you too Corky. Let’s go home and have some sausages, with cat food for Corky.”

=====

A few days passed and Rocky was taking a stroll through the forest back in Castlerock. It was still very early in the morning, but he could not sleep because it was so hot. He had decided to get up and look around the forest. Maybe he could catch a rabbit for breakfast. Rocky spotted one just peeking out of its burrow. He stopped and stood very still. Slowly he crept into the nearby hedge, waiting and watching as the rabbit carefully moved away from its home. It hopped along the hedge, picking up small berries and dandelions. Rocky was getting ready to pounce when suddenly he heard a sound coming from behind him. He turned around to



face a large dog coming through the hedge from the next field.

“Oh Rocky! You gave me such a fright. Why are you hiding in the hedge like this?” It was Irish; the huge Irish wolfhound Rocky had met before in the forest.

“Hi Irish, I was hunting for a tasty rabbit breakfast, but I think it has escaped this time. Tell me about you, Irish. Why are you up so early? Are you looking for breakfast too?”



“No, I am looking for a new home,” he barked sadly.

“What happened? Has your master abandoned you for some reason?”

“No,” Irish answered, “We have both been put out of our home. The nasty old landlord who owns the cottage has ordered us to leave. He wants to sell it, but we don’t have enough money to buy our home.” Irish started to cry a little, “What are we going to do? My master is getting old and he has nowhere else to live. I am searching for an old shed, or anything we can stay in to keep us dry. I have been looking for a whole month now but still can find nothing. We have to leave by the weekend, and that’s only two days away. Oh Rocky, can you do anything to help, PLEASE.”

“Well, remember how you helped me out in the cross country race ages ago? That horrible big greyhound kicked dirt into my eyes. I couldn’t see, so you gave me a ride on your back. It was great fun when he got

beaten, and I won. I will think about how to help you. Meet me here tomorrow at ten am and I may have a solution for you.”

Rocky went straight home after his meeting with Irish. He knew there was no point in trying to catch any rabbits now! They had all heard the fuss in the hedge and had gone back into their burrows. They wouldn't dare come out again until evening.

Rocky met Betsy and Corky coming along the path.

“Where have you been Rocky, since early morning?”

“I couldn't sleep, so I decided to go hunting for some fresh meat for breakfast instead.”

“Did you catch anything?” they both asked together.

“No, sorry, I didn't. I nearly had a rabbit but Irish came along and frightened it away.”

“Irish? What's he doing out so early?”

Rocky told them both the story about the nasty old landlord who was going to sell their cottage.

“What a horrible man. He already has lots of cottages AND a huge house all for himself.” said Betsy crossly.

“I don’t like him either,” meowed Corky, although he had never even met him.

“I want to help Irish and his master, but I just can’t think of anything useful. Can you both try to make up a plan?”

“Of course we will,” said Betsy. Her words were followed by a long meow, which meant, “Yes,” from Corky.

The three played together on the grass for hours, running and chasing each other around the trees. Corky could always get ahead of the dogs. She simply ran up a tree and jumped through the branches. Sometimes she landed on top of Rocky’s head just to shock him.

“You are just too quick for me Corky. I can never catch you. I could run for a longer distance, but that’s because I have stronger legs.”

Rocky and Corky were now tired and wanted to go home for a rest. They searched for Betsy, but she was nowhere to be seen. Rocky and Corky stood beside a large oak tree calling,

“Betsy. Betsy. Where are you? We will have to go home without you.” Then suddenly they heard a spooky type of noise.

“What’s that? I’m scared,” whispered Corky.

“Well I’m not!” announced Rocky bravely. From behind the tree appeared a tall figure all in white.

“Now I am scared,” barked Rocky, “Run for your life!” he shouted to Corky, who was already half way up the field.

“Come back you two scaredy things. It’s only me all dressed up. I found this old cloth in the bushes and put it over my head, and stood on my hind legs to scare you both - just for fun.”

“You certainly did that,” said Rocky, “I think Corky is up the highest tree in the field.”

“That’s it, that’s it,” they heard a voice calling from above their heads

“Come down here Corky. What do you mean? That’s It, it, it?” barked Rocky.

“We will frighten anyone who comes to buy the cottage. No one will want to buy a haunted house. When the the old landlord can’t sell it, he will have to let Irish and his master stay.”

“Great idea,” said Betsy.

“I was about to suggest that too,” lied Rocky, not wanting to be out done by a cat.

“Let’s go home to make plans.”

They all agreed to work on their moves after supper. Guess what Rocky ate – sausages. Corky had a small fish, while Betsy (who was always watching her figure) took only a little bit of chicken. They planned and planned most of the night. Mal and Mue had to ask them to be quiet, as they were laughing so much, while discussing what they were going to do.

“We will explain it all to Irish in the morning. I am meeting him at 10 o’clock in the field,” Rocky told them.

Soon they were all fast asleep, dreaming about how scared the old landlord and all the folk viewing the cottage would be.

Rocky, as usual, was first up next morning. It was 8 o’clock. He looked through the window and saw it was bright and sunny outside.

“A perfect day to scare the pants off someone!” he chuckled. Now he could hardly wait to meet Irish and explain their plans.

Rocky woke the others. Betsy jumped straight out of bed, giving herself a long stretch.

“This will be fun. I have had some great dreams about more things we can do.” Corky was not as energetic as the two dogs. She felt that this was a ridiculous hour to waken.

“I’ll get up in a minute,” she mumbled, as she turned over and snuggled deeper into her blanket.

“I’m going to have a really big breakfast this morning. There are lots of things to do and more plans to make.” Announced Rocky.

“That’s nothing unusual for you Rocky. Any excuse for more food,” thought Betsy.

It was now almost nine thirty.

“Is that cat up yet?” growled Rocky from the kitchen.

When Corky heard Rocky’s voice sounding angry, she jumped quickly out of bed.

“Coming now Rocky. I’m cleaning my coat and tail. I have to look tidy for going out,” she meowed.

“Well hurry up. You know I don’t like being late. It’s bad manners. Don’t forget I am a pedigree Jackabee, and pedigrees are always well mannered, and on time.”

Corky arrived in the kitchen grabbing a piece of tuna fish from last night’s dinner, and dashed out through the door saying,

“What’s keeping you two? Did you sleep late this morning?” she laughed. Rocky didn’t find this to be a very funny thing to say.

“Let’s go. Irish will be waiting for me.”

They ran for about 30 minutes before reaching the spot where they were to meet Irish. It was exactly ten o’clock, so they knew they were in good time. All three heard Irish coming along the path through the next field.



His head was down as he plodded along. There was none of the usual spring in his step. Poor Irish was really distressed at having to leave the cottage he loved so much.

Behind the cottage was a spring of clean fresh water where Irish would often bathe, before the little river trickled down to the sea. For some reason the water always seemed to be warm. Maybe he only imagined this because he enjoyed himself so much there. Next to the spring was an old tree its branches knurled with age. Irish had been told it was about two hundred years old. Imagine being two hundred years old! Think of all the knowledge you would have collected during that time. Sadly the tree could not speak to Irish, unlike some of the magic trees in the forest at Castlerock. They were able to talk to Rocky. Irish shook his head as he walked along the path.

“There’s no point in thinking about those sorts of things.” he muttered. “There’s no hope now.”

His thoughts were interrupted by shouts. “Hi Irish, lovely morning. How are you this fine day?” It was Rocky and the gang calling.

“I’m Ok I suppose. Although I haven’t found a new home yet.”

“You may not need to move after all,” Rocky announced.

“That’s right,” the others chipped in, “We have invented a great plan.”

“A plan to help my master and I stay? It’s not possible. The nasty old landlord is making us leave tomorrow. He doesn’t care that we have no place to stay.”

“Don’t worry about that. I have explained everything to Mal and Mue. They are willing for you to stay at the caravan with us for a while. They are going on holiday to France

and we can have it all to ourselves for two weeks!"

Irish started to cheer up a little. In fact Betsy thought she could spot a little smile on his long droopy face.

"Don't worry any more Irish. We will soon have your home sorted out," barked Betsy, "Remember how Rocky was able to do all sorts of things. He can even think up great plans too."

Corky was a little amused at this remark. After all it was her suggestion in the first place. They all sat on the grass, heads together while Rocky explained the plan to Irish.

"Now go back to the cottage and tell your master all about this. Don't forget to do things exactly as arranged."

Later that night Irish and his master packed all their belongings and made their way to the caravan.



### IRISH AT THE COTTAGE

“Good riddance,” they heard a voice call from behind a gate. It was the nasty landlord. “Now I can sell my cottage and make lots more money.”

“What about us?” asked Rob, who was Irish’s owner.

“You and your dog are not important. I only care about myself. I want a lot more money

than I get from you. In fact I intend to become really rich!”

“And what would you do with it all, if you did get it?” barked Irish.

“I would sit all day counting it over and over again.”

“Oh you are such a silly greedy man. We have been paying a lot of money every month to rent your cottage. You do not need to sell it.”

At that point the landlord got really nasty. He lifted his shot gun, and fired into the air, shouting,

“Get off my land. Never let me see you again.”

Rocky had made up a comfortable bed for Rob, with a warm blanket on the floor for Irish, (when he found one big enough.)

Next day the selfish landlord put a sign up at the cottage. In large letters it read, “FOR SALE”. The seller is very willing to help all people interested in buying this property.

It didn't take long before people from a nearby town came to view the cottage. Rocky and the gang knew they were coming, as the estate agent's dog was able to warn them. He was a friend of Rocky's called Roscoe. He was on the lookout for any inquirers interested in the cottage. Roscoe hated the nasty landlord too. He had kicked Roscoe one time when he called in to the estate agent's office wanting to buy more cottages. Roscoe was more than willing to help when Rocky told him the story.

"Right, let's put this plan into action," barked Rocky. The team knew exactly what to do. Firstly, before anyone arrived to the cottage, Rocky and Betsy had to sneak through an open window round the back of the house. One of them went to the bathroom to hide. Irish had things prepared for them as arranged. Part of the plan had been for him to make two hiding places before he left home. One was to be under the bath, and the other in the wardrobe of the front bedroom. They both waited silently until they heard people

arriving. The nasty landlord was there, showing them around his property. Rocky could hear him telling the callers, “This is my best cottage. The people who lived here before moved out, because they have been offered a new job. It is much further away, and that’s why they’ve had to find another property closer to their work.” He told lots more lies. He even pretended he was the best landlord anyone could hope for.

Suddenly the bedroom door opened. Rocky could see a man’s legs and then a woman’s as they passed the wardrobe. Rocky quickly reached out his paw, scratching the woman’s leg, while at the same time making a horribly scary sound. The woman let out a scream.

“What was that?”

“What do you mean dear? I didn’t see or hear anything,” said her husband.

“Something attacked me. Look I have scratches on my leg. An awful sound frightened me at exactly the same moment.”

“Oh don’t be silly. You’re imagining things. You probably scratched your leg on the edge of that old wardrobe. Come on. We’ll have a look at the bathroom now. I’m sure it will be lovely. They all walked into the bathroom, where Betsy was hiding under the bath. Just as the man passed Betsy clawed at his ankle also making a horrible sound.

The man yelled,

“What was that? Look I have scratch marks on my leg now too, and I definitely heard a strange sound this time. What is going on in this place?”

“It’s nothing sir, nothing at all,” said the landlord. “I can assure you nothing like this has ever happened before.”

“Well! we are leaving right now before something else happens.”



The two were about to get into their car when they saw something very strange. There, on the grass, beside their car was a dancing white sheet. It was no more than about half a metre tall. The terrified viewers jumped into their car and revved off at full speed.

Meantime Rocky and Betsy had climbed out of the window and run down the path. When they saw the car coming they both started dancing on an old upturned dustbin, lying at the side of the road.

“We will never, ever, come back to this place again.”

“I think the old man is crazy!” they both agreed, as they sped off into the distance.

Soon word spread around the town about the spooky things that happened at the cottage. Two months passed. Not one person ever came to view the place.

In the end the nasty old landlord had to beg Irish and his master to come back. He even offered to reduce their rent, as anything would be better than nothing. They made him promise he would never force them to leave again.

Irish and Rob were thrilled with this news. When they moved back in to their home again they had a huge party. All the dogs in the area were invited. However there was only one cat welcome, and of course that was Corky.

Rocky stretched himself in the sun. It was a really beautiful day, and once again he got up early. This time he wasn't looking for breakfast. His tummy was still full from the night before. Mue and Mal had been out for dinner. They brought home lovely leftover food from the restaurant for Rocky and Betsy in a doggy bag. Corky only liked his own

special dinners of fish and chicken. She was a bit fussy about her food.

Rocky was taking a stroll along the beach. The water was still a bit cold so he stayed mostly on the sand. From time to time he paddled his paws in the water, but not for long! Rocky enjoyed looking into the pools caught between the rocks. When the water was still he could see himself and the sky. He happened to be admiring himself in one of these pools when he saw another face looking at him. He got such a shock he jumped backwards, almost knocking over a boy standing right behind him. He was looking into the pool too.

“What are you doing?” Rocky barked, “You nearly gave me a fright.”

“I’m very sorry I startled you. I was looking for some crabs or small fish caught in the pool. I eat them for breakfast.”

“I never heard you coming up behind me,” said Rocky; “Although I have very good hearing and usually hear every sound.”

“Maybe you were too busy admiring yourself to hear any noises. What if I had been a lion or a tiger? I could have eaten you for breakfast.”

Rocky thought about that for a moment, and then changed the subject because he did not like the thoughts of being eaten.

“What’s your name boy,” asked Rocky.

“Everyone calls me Remo,” answered the boy.

“Remo. That’s nice, but what’s your real name?”

“That is my real name. I have never had any other ones.”

“I think you should ask your mum or dad. They would know if you had any other names.”

“I would, but I am an orphan. My parents have gone away, and I never really knew them,” Remo said sadly.

“Oh, I am so sorry Remo,” said Rocky, “Where do you live now?”

“I live with some gypsies. We move all around the country in caravans pulled by strong horses. We have been staying in this town now for two days. Most people don’t like us. They say we are dirty, and some say that we are bad people, but we are neither. I wash every morning and night before going to bed. I always clean my teeth with salt.”

“Have you not got any toothpaste?”

“We never have much money and so we have to make do with whatever we have.”

Remo smiled to show Rocky his teeth. Sure enough they were gleaming white with no decay in any of them.

“Wow!” said Rocky, “You mustn’t eat too many sweets. If you did you wouldn’t have such good teeth.”

“I never get sweets, or any treats. We can’t afford them.”

Just then a large man came along the beach, shouting, “Remo, Remo. Where are you?”

“I had better run now. He’s the gypsy king, and we all have to do what he says.”

“Meet me here tomorrow, at nine o’clock,” whispered Rocky.

“Ok, I will,” Remo shouted back, as he ran towards the man.

Rocky finished his walk and returned back home quickly. He told Betsy and Corky all about meeting Remo in the rocks.

“I would like to meet him,” said Betsy.

“Me too,” joined in Corky. “He sounds mysterious and exciting. Imagine moving to a

different place every few days, in a caravan that's being pulled along by a big horse."

"I know," barked Betsy, "After we finish eating breakfast we'll all go to see if we can find the gypsy caravans."

After breakfast they went outside.

"Now, let's think. Where should we look first?" asked Betsy.

"Come on, follow me. We'll look around where I met Remo."

Sure enough after about a mile or so they saw smoke coming from behind the hills.

"It must be a camp fire," said Rocky. "Now everyone keep very quiet and we will sneak up to the gypsy camp."

The two dogs and cat moved very slowly in the long grass, and eventually came to a point where they could see all that was going on in the valley below. This was where the gypsies

had made their camp. The big heavy man who



had been calling Remo was stoking the fire. The others, maybe twenty or more, were gathering sticks and pieces of wood to keep the fire going. The caravans, of all different colours, some yellow, others red, and green, were all positioned in a ring.

Rocky thought they looked very bright and cheerful.

Their six horses were in the next field, feeding on the luscious grass. It had been raining the



night before and the grass always looks very green and fresh after a shower.

A different man came out of his caravan and placed some fish on the fire, while another man put chicken and another put a different type of meat on to it. Rocky didn't know what it was, maybe rabbit?

When all the food was cooked they sat around the fire to eat their breakfast. Remo and the other children looked very happy, and everyone was singing cheerful songs.

The three spies were getting up from their hiding place, when suddenly, they saw a big man standing over them.

"What are you lot doing here?" he asked.

"We have come to see the gypsies," said Rocky. "We have never seen gypsies before, and so we are really curious."

"Well, come down to the camp and meet everyone."

Rocky was a bit scared, but went down anyway with Betsy and Corky. Remo came over to greet them and introduced them to all his friends. He told them that he had met Rocky on the rocks yesterday morning.

“Would your friends like some chicken or fish?” asked the big man.

“No, not for me, thank you,” answered Rocky. “I have already had breakfast.” The other two agreed, and also thanked the gypsy man for his offer.

“Are you a king?” asked Rocky.

“I am indeed, but only for this year. Each year we elect a different king.”

“Please tell us about the gypsy life.”

Corky wanted to know how they managed, and where they stayed.

The big man told them how gypsies liked to move about from town to town.

“That’s why we live in caravans. We want a quiet and slow type of life style. No rushing around like other people. We like to live simply. We don’t have much money but we don’t need a lot. As long as there is plenty love and singing, and of course a little food.” The big man lifted a violin from beside a bed in the caravan and started to play a merry tune. The others gathered around and started to dance and sing.

“My goodness! It’s not even noon and they are all singing and dancing already.”

“What a big happy family they are. I would love to be a gipsy.” thought Rocky.

The three stayed with the gypsies most of the day, playing with the children and watching the adults tending to their horses and caravans.

“It’s getting close to teatime,” Betsy warned the others.

“Yes, we had better be going home now.  
“agreed Rocky, Maybe we’ll see you all  
tomorrow,”

That night as Rocky, Betsy, and Corky were  
have their dinner, they heard Mal and Mue  
talking in the other room.

Mal was saying that Mrs Brown’s gold ring  
has gone missing. She had been to the beach  
for a swim and left her ring along with her  
clothes beside the car. When she came back  
the clothes were still there, but the ring had  
gone.

“Oh dear. When I was in the post office today,  
a man was saying his silver watch had gone  
missing. He had taken it off while he was  
cleaning the car, and set in on the window  
ledge. He went inside for a few moments, and  
when he came out again the watch had gone!”  
Mue added

“People are saying that this has all started  
since those gipsies came to town. Some folk

are even threatening that they will chase them away if it happens again.”

“I don’t believe that at all,” said Rocky.

“Neither do we,” chimed in Betsy and Corky.

“I don’t think those people would steal anything!” Betsy was feeling really cross.

However, next day two more pieces of jewellery had disappeared. One was a small silver egg cup that Miss Fluff, the school teacher, had set on the garden table. She was going to put her boiled egg in it for breakfast. By the time she had gone to fetch the egg the cup was stolen. The second missing item was another watch. Mr Lamont had set his down on the patio ledge while he washed his hands.

“It’s been one of those gipsies!” Mr Lamont shouted. He told the policeman who had come to investigate, “I only left it for a minute beside that open window, to wash my hands. Somebody must have put their hand through and stolen it.”

The police man was writing all the details down.

“Hmmm,” he said, “That’s a gold ring, two watches, and a golden egg cup which have all gone missing over the last few days. This problem all started since those gypsies arrived. I will have a word with them.” the policeman said in a very stern voice.

Meantime Rocky heard that the people of the town were getting very angry. They were blaming the gypsies, and calling them thieves. They wanted to chase them out of the village for good.

Rocky got the gang together.

“We must run over to the gypsy camp immediately to warn them about what’s happening, before the people of the town arrive.

Rocky, Betsy, and Corky ran as fast as they could to the camp. The first person they met

was Remo. They told him everything. Remo was very cross indeed.

“We have never stolen anything – ever.” He told the king, who became very cross. “How can people think that we gipsies stole their things? It certainly was not us!” he shouted.

“We know it isn’t you, but somebody is doing it,” said Rocky. “We will set a trap to catch the real thief. Have you any old rings that you do longer use? Something that is not too valuable. It will be our bait to catch this thief.”

The king looked at Rocky, saying with a little laugh in his voice,

“You have come to the right people for jewels and trinkets. We have far too many of them! I will get some for you now.”

The king went into his caravan and returned shortly with a handful of shiny gold, silver, and coloured trinkets.

“Here Rocky. See what you can do with this lot.”

Rocky and the gang dashed back to the village. That night they sat together and hatched out a plan. Each one was to place a ring or a piece of jewellery on a window sill under a street light. This would make the gold sparkle, and maybe, they hoped, the real thief would see the jewellery and try to steal it.

At midnight the gang placed their pieces of gold and silver. Each of them took cover nearby, where they could watch their bait. They waited and waited. It was now four o'clock in the morning and nothing had happened. Rocky was beginning to fall asleep. As for the other two - they were already snoring.

Another hour passed and dawn was breaking. The morning sky was very beautiful, all red and orange touched with blue over the mountains. Rocky's eyes were closing. Suddenly he heard a rustle in the bushes



nearby. Rocky was now fully alert and ready for action.

The noise stopped and started again, as if someone or something was moving in closer and closer. Rocky felt a bit frightened.

“What if it were a lion or a tiger?” thought Rocky. “It would eat me for breakfast.”

Rocky knew he was imagining all this. There were no lions or tigers in this country. “Far too cold for them!” he assured himself.

The noise was now a lot closer, in fact right above Rocky’s head.

He looked up, just in time to see a huge magpie fly from the tree beside him to the window sill to steal the golden ring. The magpie then quickly flew back over the tree and into the forest. It only took a few seconds and he was gone. Rocky shook his head.

“Now I know the real thief is a magpie, and a very fast one too!”

“Wake up you two,” Rocky barked to Betsy and Corky “I know who the real thief is now, but he will be hard to catch.”

They were so exhausted by the time they got home. The three spent most of the day in bed. Mal and Mue were getting a bit worried, as they would normally be up and about playing in the garden or at the beach. Of course their owners didn’t know that the three had been out all night hunting for a thief. Mue decided they needed some food, and even brought them a dinner up to bed.

After sleeping most of the day the three were ready again for night patrol. The rings were left on the same window ledge as the night before. This time all three stayed awake. Corky climbed one of the highest trees nearby to watch where the magpie had its nest. The two dogs lay quietly in the bushes. Sure enough, just as dawn was breaking, the magpie lifted the rings and went off again over the trees. Corky watched the bird flying

towards a large oak tree. It landed high among the branches and disappeared into its nest.

“We have got you now,” announced Corky.

The other two followed Corky until they came to the big oak tree. It looked as if it might even be the tallest tree in the forest.

“You stay here,” warned Corky, “I am going up myself.”

“Be really careful,” whispered Betsy, “It’s such a high climb.”

“Don’t worry. I won’t fall. My claws can grip into anything.”

Corky climbed high into the foliage until they lost sight of her. After about ten minutes they could hear squawking and flapping coming from high up in the tree.

“I think Corky has found the magpie’s nest,” barked Rocky excitedly.

Next thing they knew was that something was coming crashing down to the ground beside them. It was a bird's nest. Yes, it was the magpie's nest. It looked like an Aladdin's cave inside - filled with all kinds of jewellery. There were cufflinks, brooches, rings, and watches. Down jumped Corky with the magpie in her mouth. It wasn't injured as she was carrying it very gently but firmly. The thief couldn't fly away. Suddenly Mal and Mue arrived on the scene.

"We heard a lot of noise in the forest when we were having breakfast. What's happening?"

"Here is your thief!" Rocky announced proudly, (as if he had done all the work himself)

"So I see," said Mal, "Look at all those jewels. We were wrong to blame the gypsies. We'll have to apologise to them as soon as possible."

“Let’s hear what have you to say for yourself, Mr Magpie,” asked Betsy.

“I’m sorry,” said the magpie, “I just cannot help stealing shiny things. I like to decorate my nest with them.”

“In the future you should stick to shiny paper, and that type of thing, to decorate your nest. If not you’ll be in serious trouble, maybe even ending up in a bird prison.”

“I will, I will,” squawked the magpie, “Please let me go.”

“You can go this time,” said Corky, as he released his grip.

The bird flew away over the tree tops and was never seen again in the forest. Rocky and the others ran to the gypsy camp, to tell them what had happened, but they were gone! All the painted caravans, the horses, and all the boys and girls had moved away.

“I wonder they will ever come back here again?” Rocky sighed sadly.

---

A few weeks passed and things were very quiet in Castlerock. The gang played together on the sand and in the forest. One day, when they were about to enter the forest they noticed a large sign.

ALL DOGS KEEP OUT. RABBITS, HARES, MICE,  
AND JUICY RATS ARE ALL WELCOME.

Signed by, Fierce fox, the Leader.

“What is this?” barked Rocky angrily. “Are the foxes trying to own the forest, and keep it for themselves?”

“Looks like it,” answered Betsy.

“That can’t be right. There are only a few foxes here, and they are our friends. I have

never heard of this one called Fiercefox,” said Rocky

“No, neither have I. Maybe he’s a new fox to the forest, and thinks he can keep it all to himself.” Betsy looked up to the hill top and saw at least FIFTY foxes! They all started howling and baring their teeth.

“Let’s get out of here!” shouted Rocky. “I am not frightened of them you know, but I just think it would be safer to go back to the caravan.”

As they were running back they met Irish.

“Hi Irish,” Rocky and Betsy barked together.

“Have you met the foxes yet?” asked Irish.

“No, we didn’t, but we saw them on the hill top, and we read their warning notice.”

“They arrived two days ago. I don’t know where they’ve come from, but I do know they

have a very cunning and vicious leader called



### IRISH SAW FIERCE FOX ON THE HILL

Fierce fox, I was going for my usual walk yesterday when they attacked me! I had to run for my life,” barked Irish. “It’s as well I have long legs.”

“Wow,” said Rocky, “If they are brave enough to attack a big dog like you, they would definitely attack anyone of us. We’ll have to think about this very carefully. There’s no



way we are giving up our forest without a fight.”

“But Rocky,” Betsy chimed in, “There are so many of them....”

“That’s why we will have to get all the dogs together, and have a council meeting. Wait, I’m so silly. There is no dog council in Castlerock. I will have to gather them from around here and hold a meeting.”

“I think I know what you mean Rocky,” said Betsy. Although she still wasn’t too sure what Rocky meant about councils and no councils. “I will tell all the dogs I meet, and they will let all their friends know that there is to be a big dog meeting in the village.”

“Yes. Tell them all to come here at the edge of the forest. Two pm sharp, tomorrow. We can decide then how to get rid of these cheeky foxes.”

It was coming up to two o’clock next day. Rocky and Betsy had told as many dogs as



possible the night before to come to the meeting. They stood at the edge of the forest waiting for them to arrive.

“Look,” gasped Betsy, “Here they come.”

Rocky looked down the path. Sure enough he saw Poppy from the caravan site, Irish, and Ollie, followed by Fergus, Billy, Finnegan, and two others Rocky didn’t know. Finally came Corky, arguing with one of the dogs. He had said that cats weren’t allowed at the meeting.

Rocky counted them. Eight plus Betsy and Rocky.

He was very disappointed.

“I thought there would be a lot more coming from the village. I suppose they are frightened of the foxes. Well, at least we have ten brave dogs, and one brave cat.” But he knew they wouldn’t be strong enough against fifty foxes.

Betsy started to laugh.

“What’s so funny? This is serious Betsy,” barked Rocky.

“Sorry Rocky, I was remembering the dream you had one time about the magic forest. You met all those gnomes, and the trees talked to you. It was a strange dream alright.”

“It wasn’t a dream. I told you before that it was real. It did happen, only you won’t believe me.”

Rocky suddenly stopped talking. All the dogs stared at him without as much as a bark. They

seemed to sense that Rocky had worked out a plan. Indeed he had.

“Let’s go home,” he finally announced. “I have work to do tonight.” Rocky told the others he was going into the forest alone to find the Gnomes. “Maybe they will be able to help.”

“Oh please don’t!” begged Betsy, “If those foxes catch you, you will be eaten alive.”

“I know that, but this is my only option. The best chance I have is to go after dark and alone.”

“Rocky you are so brave, but sometimes you can also be very stupid,” whispered Betsy into his ear, “Please be careful. You know I love you.”

“Enough of all that soft talk, you know I am tough and crafty, and a lot smarter than this fox. Don’t forget I lived with foxes for a long time. I even saved their lives once.”

It was after midnight. Rocky crawled from under his blanket and slipped out through the back door very quietly. He ran towards the forest, and as he got closer he dropped down onto his tummy. He knew this is what soldiers would do in battle. Rocky kept in tight to the hedge and crept stealthily passed the big sign. Once he was inside the forbidden area, he made his way to where he knew the Gnomes met at night. Rocky looked everywhere while still moving very slowly forward. He was being as quiet as possible. He daren't waken the foxes, as he had to pass really close by them. He could hear them all snoring loudly.

Suddenly he felt a tap on his shoulder. Rocky was startled and turned around very quickly - ready to bark and snap. Then he remembered not to make a sound.

"It's only me," said the gnome, "What are you doing sneaking about the forest at this time of night? Don't you realise that it is very dangerous here now days. These nasty foxes have taken over our territory. We are really

frightened of them. That's why there is no more music or dancing. Even the trees won't talk anymore. They are afraid the foxes will scratch their trunks and pull down their branches."

"Well, I'm not frightened of them," whispered Rocky, "What I do want is to have our forest back to the way it used to be. We will all have to pull together to scare them, in a way which will send them packing. I have a plan, but I will need all the gnomes and trees in the forest to help me."

"Of course Rocky, We'll all help. We need rid of these foxes urgently too."

"It's a great plan. You'll have to explain it to all the other gnomes by tomorrow night. It goes like this - At twelve midnight we will," Rocky told the gnome what needed to be done. He nodded to show he understood, and then ran off to tell all the others.

Rocky went back to the caravan and got straight into bed. In the morning he gathered all the dogs together and told them the plan.

“That is really brilliant Rocky. How do you think up these things?” wondered the dogs, as they ran off to prepare for the night’s adventure.

“I will bring my cat friends too,” announced Corky.

“Great idea, bring as many as you can, but warn them not to start fighting with the dogs. We only want to fight foxes.”

Corky ran off to tell her friends, shouting, and “Don’t worry. We promise.”

It was midnight in the forest. Rocky, Betsy and all the others were in position on one side of the hill. Corky was waiting at the bottom of the path with fifty cats he had rounded up. The gnomes and the trees were waiting in the forest. Rocky gave a loud bark, the signal to attack.

The other dogs started to howl and the cats started to scream. The noise was scary.

The foxes came out of their dens, totally bewildered, shouting to each other,



“What’s all the noise? What’s happening?”  
They started running away from the noise.  
That only took them straight into the path of  
the gnomes, who were each carrying two  
lanterns. The gnomes waved their lanterns



and also made weird noises. The trees tripped them up with their long branches as they dashed past. The foxes felt as if the whole forest had come alive. They were really frightened now and wanted to escape. Suddenly Rocky spied Fiercfox running towards him. He jumped out and caught him by the nose, closing his strong jaws tightly. Fiercfox squealed for mercy. Rocky held the fox in a powerful grip. The two rolled down a steep embankment and into the river. Rocky wouldn't let go. He was still gripping the fox's nose.

"Please, please Rocky! Please let me go."  
begged Fierce fox.

"I will," said Rocky, "But only if you promise never to come back to my forest again."

"I won't! I never knew that there were so many of you. There must have been 500 at least attacking us in the forest."



PLEASE, PLEASE LET ME GO, BEGGED FIERCRFOX

“Yes,” barked Rocky, “And we have another 500 waiting to come on my signal. Now get out of here and take all your silly foxes with you, Feirdyfox. That’s what I am going to call you from now on. You are not fierce at all!” Feirdyfox ran off as fast as he could and was never seen again in that forest.

Rocky was still in the river and felt something sharp under his leg.

“What is that?” He rummaged in the water and brought out a shiny gold plate. Rocky left the plate on the bank where he could find it again in daytime. He ran up where all the dogs, cats and the gnomes were dancing and playing music again, because they were so happy that the foxes had all gone. The trees whistled in the wind to the tune and swayed to and fro with the rhythm.

Rocky told Betsy about the gold coloured plate he had found.

“Wow,” barked Betsy, “We could be rich. There might even be lots of treasures hidden there. Maybe hundreds of years ago the pirates sailed on that river and hid all their treasure there.”

“You have a great imagination Betsy. It would not do any harm to look around where I found the gold plate. Why don’t we go there right away? Don’t tell anyone else. This is our secret.”

The pair set off for the forest and down to the river. Rocky had hidden the plate under a bush near a big stone. He knew just where to find it again. Rocky lifted the plate between his paws. He looked at it very carefully this time.

“Look, there is an inscription on the bottom of it.”

“Let me see,” barked Betsy, “I can read much better than you.” Rocky handed the plate over to Betsy.

Betsy read it aloud,  
“THIS GOLD PLATE HAS BEEN AWARDED TO  
CAPTAIN JAMES JONES FOR HIS BRAVERY  
DURING THE WAR.”

“I wonder how it got here in the river?” asked Rocky.

“Maybe it was stolen. Let’s look in the river to see if there is anything else down there.”

They dived into the water and rummaged about for a few minutes, and then Rocky came up with a gold ring. Betsy had found a beautiful gold and diamond necklace. They went down again, and each time they found more and more pieces of jewellery. After an hour's diving and swimming underwater they were exhausted and decided that that was enough for one day.

“What are we going to do with all this jewellery, Rocky? There must be hundreds, maybe even thousands of pounds worth here. We could sell it all and go and live in some nice warm country like Spain.”

Rocky stopped her right there.

“This is stolen property and I am sure the people would like to get their treasures back. I am going straight to the police.”

“Yes,” agreed Betsy, “I was only dreaming. It's the right thing to do. We will take a little with

us to the police station in case they won't believe us. "

"Ok. You bring the necklace and I will bring a ring. Let's get going."

The pair ran up the steep bank to the path in the forest, carrying the gold firmly between their teeth.

From nowhere came a loud voice,

"WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU ARE GOING WITH MY GOLD?" The voice shouted.

Rocky and Betsy stopped running and looked all around. Suddenly a hand grabbed them both by the collar and lifted them into the air. Two ugly looking men, one of whom was called Pete shouted,

"Where did you find my gold?"

"It's not your gold," Rocky insisted, "It belongs to other people, and you have stolen it from them. You are both thieves and should be put in prison."

The robbers warned Rocky and Betsy that they would not let them go unless they handed over all the gold. The robbers announced that they had stolen the goods but had had to drop them in the river because the police were chasing them. Now they had come back to collect the treasure. They weren't going to let two dogs take it from them.

The robbers found the rest of the jewels on the river bank where Rocky and Betsy had left them.

“What will we do with these two?”

“We will tie a big stone to their back legs and throw them back into the river. As they like swimming so much let's see if they can swim out of that.” The robbers started to laugh and snigger to themselves, thinking this was very funny.

They found two large stones and tied them to Rocky's and Betsy's back legs, then threw the two of them into the middle of the river. The

big stones pulled Rocky and Betsy down under the water. They were gasping for air when the stones settled on the bottom. Luckily the rope was just long enough for Rocky and Betsy's noses to reach the surface of the water so they could breathe a little.

"We can't last very long like this," bubbled Rocky under the water.

Betsy was too frightened to speak. She was trying to hold her breath for as long as possible.

Rocky heard a splash just behind him. He turned his head to see Corky struggling towards him. She could barely swim.

"The things I do for you pair!" Corky dived under water and cut through the rope with her sharp teeth. Rocky was free. She came up for air and then dived again to free Betsy.

When they all reached the bank Rocky was about to explain what had happened.



“No need,” said Corky, “I have been following you both from the caravan. I saw everything. I reckoned you would both get into some kind of trouble as usual, and would need me to help you both out.”

“Grrr,” answered Rocky, “Ok, we did need your help, but please don’t be telling everyone. I will never be able to bear the shame of having to accept help from a cat TWICE. What will all the dogs think of me?”

“Never mind that,” barked Betsy, “We have to chase after those robbers before they get too far away.”

“Yes come on. Let’s get them.”

The trio ran up the side of the bank back to the path. They got a scent of the robbers in front of them, so the dogs followed their trail, and Corky followed the dogs. They ran on for about a mile until they reached the car park. When they got there the robbers had gone, but they had left a trail of mud from the tyres

of the car, or van, or whatever it was they were driving.

The dogs followed the mud trail into Castlerock and up to an old farmyard. They were just in time to see the van go into a broken down cow shed. Rocky heard the men whispering. One was saying,

“The jewels will be ok here for tonight. We will ship them to France in the morning. Then we’ll be rich. All the people we stole from will be sad, but we don’t care about them. We’ll be happy and have everything we want.”

“What an awfully greedy man,” muttered Betsy.

“Yes. They both need to be locked up for a very long time,” agreed Rocky.

After the men went into the old farmhouse Rocky and Betsy looked in through the door of the cow shed. They couldn’t believe their eyes. The place was covered with all sorts of stolen goods. There were clocks of all sizes,

ornaments, golf clubs, fishing rods and jewels everywhere.

“These two must have been stealing for a long time,” said Betsy.

“All good things must come to an end, and it’s the end for this pair,” announced Rocky.

“Come on, I have a plan. It will only work if we carry it out before dawn. Follow me. We have to run a few miles.”

They followed Rocky up and down country lanes until Rocky stopped at Benvardin Dog Kennels. It was now after midnight and everyone had gone to bed. Rocky quickly woke the dogs with a few sharp barks, which in turn woke Louise and Shaun who worked there looking after all the dogs. Louise looked out the window to see what all the noise was about.

“Rocky is that you?”

Rocky barked again, and Louise came down the stairs to open the door.

“What the matter Rocky?”

Rocky explained as best he could that he needed Louise and Shaun to follow him with the van.

They both followed Rocky and Betsy all the way to the farmyard, where Rocky pointed out the shed that held all the treasure.

Louise and Shaun, helped by Rocky, Betsy, and of course Corky, carried all the stolen goods out of the shed, and put them in their van. They all climbed in and went straight to the police station. Next morning the two robbers went to the shed to move their treasure. Instead all they found were six burly policemen ready to take them to jail.

As for Rocky and Betsy, they were offered a huge reward. One thousand pounds for finding all the stolen goods and catching the two robbers.

“What shall we do with all this money Betsy?” asked Rocky.

“Well, remember how I thought about going to live somewhere hot, where we could lie in the sun all day?”

“I remember,” answered Rocky.

“Now I think that would be too selfish of us. I think the best thing we can do is give the money to Shaun and Louise in Benvardin. They looked after us so well when we were strays and now they still look after lots of other dogs who don’t have a home.”

“That’s a great idea Betsy. That’s why I love you so much.”

“What’s got into him? He must be getting soft,” Betsy thought.

---

Another few weeks passed and Rocky was getting a bit bored. Nothing much was happening. He and Betsy played with Corky most days on the beach and in the forest at Castlerock.

Rocky thought it must be nearly dinner time so he started to run back to the caravan. The other two followed behind as they couldn't keep up with him. On the way Rocky spotted a new cat in town.

"I must give it a chase." The cat didn't know Rocky was only playing, and it took off as fast as it could. Rocky took up the chase and was quickly closing in on him. The cat turned and ran across a main road. Rocky followed, without looking right or left as he was always told to do. He ran straight across the road. Bang. A police car hit Rocky and threw him into the air. Rocky came down with an almighty thud right on his head. His collar with his name on it was torn into pieces and fell beside him.

He lay on the road with his eyes shut and not moving.

"Rocky won't waken up," a man shouted. By this time Betsy and Corky had come on the scene.



### BANG! A POLICE CAR HIT ROCKY

“Oh my poor Rocky,” cried Betsy, “What has happened to you? I always said someday you could be knocked down, because you run so fast without look out for traffic.”

“Someone call an ambulance. I will tell Mal and Mue to come.” But just as she was about to let them know Rocky jumped up and ran around in circles. Then he staggered down the

road, zigzagging from one side to the other. Betsy ran after him shouting,

“Rocky, Rocky come back.” Rocky looked back and barked, “Leave me alone I don’t know you, or anyone who’s called Rocky.”

Betsy couldn’t keep up with him. She stopped running.

“He must have lost his memory when he hit his head.”

Rocky kept on running. He didn’t know where he was, or where he was going. He had forgotten his own name as well as everything else. He continued until he was so exhausted he just had to stop and lie down. Rocky saw a lay-by at the side of the road with some straw that had fallen off a tractor. He lay down and fell asleep right away.

Rocky slept for hours, and only woke when a farmer, who had stopped to have a sandwich on his way back from a market, shook him to see if he was alive or not.



“I’m sorry for waking you,” said the farmer,  
“But when I saw you lying there I thought you  
were dead.”

Rocky sat up and looked all around him.  
Finally he said,

“Where am I, and who are you?”

“My name is Henry Carson, and I was across  
the border buying a new tractor and trailer.  
The one I am driving now.”

“What do you mean by across the border?”

“I mean exactly what I say. I own a farm in  
Donegal, on the other side of the Foyle.”

The farmer continued, “Now who are you,  
and where do you come from?”

“I don’t know,” replied Rocky in distress. “I  
can’t even remember my name, or where I  
live, or what I am doing here.”

“Well,” said Henry, “I can’t leave you here like  
this. Besides you need a bandage on your

head, it is badly bruised and your eye is swollen. It looks like you have had an accident of some kind.”

“Thank you so much,” barked Rocky. “I would like to come with you, as you do seem to be very kind.”

“I have two Alsatians and two sheep dogs on the farm and they all have to work for their living. You will have to do some work too whenever you feel better.” The farmer started up his new tractor and off they went. After about an hour they passed Castlerock. Rocky looked across the fields and the forest, where he had played many times, but he did not recognise any of it.

Henry suddenly said, “We will have to give you a name. I need to call you something. How about Tiger? It suits you - because you have a tiger coloured coat.”

“That’s fine by me,” answered Rocky, who was now called Tiger.

The farmer came to a ferry terminal and drove the tractor and trailer on board. The ferry quickly took them both across the Foyle to Donegal, which was part of a different country.

After a few miles the farmer turned into a long lane leading up to the farm and his house. The four dogs came running towards him as he approached the yard.

“Hello you lot,” shouted Henry. “This is Tiger. He has been hurt in an accident and needs to be looked after for a while. Once he is better he can help us on the farm.

The four dogs ran over to Tiger and sniffed all around him, as dogs do when they greet each other.

“Come on inside,” barked one of the collies.

Rocky slowly followed the dogs into the farm house. He gazed all around the room. Along one wall was a roaring fire which looked very inviting, as it was now rather chilly outside.

There were two really worn settees which seemed comfortable. Next to the settees was an old rocking chair.

“That’s my chair,” announced Henry. “Nobody sits in it but me. You dogs can sit or lie anywhere you like, as long as you stay away from my rocking chair.”

Rocky climbed straight on to one of the settees and fell asleep for several hours.

When he awoke one of the collies was standing beside him, with a juicy bone in her mouth.

“This is for you Tiger,” she told him. “I hope you are feeling better. Henry put some ointment on your swollen eye and a bandage on your head while you were sleeping. He is very good to us. He cares a lot about animals.”

“What is your name? Where am I?” Asked Rocky.

“My name is Candy. I am a collie and my job here is looking after the sheep on the farm. I keep them in order, and don’t let them wander off the farm, in case the foxes get them. As for your next question, you are on a farm in a place called Dunfannaghy, in Donegal. It’s in Ireland. That’s all I know, and now you know as much as I do.”

“Not quite. I don’t know my own name, I am sure it’s not Tiger!”

“Well, maybe not, but it is a nice name, and you are the same colour as a tiger. I really hope you are not as ferocious as a Tiger. Otherwise you might eat me and all the other dogs too,” Candy said laughing.

“No, I am not like that! What are the names of the other dogs and what do they do on the farm?”

“The other collie is called Ruby. She is my sister, and helps me take care of the sheep. The two bigger dogs are Bill and Ben. They

are supposed to be guard dogs, but they are just stupid. When the foxes come to kill a lamb they run and hide. Big cowards I call them. I was told by one of the dogs in the village that they once worked as guards in a big castle, but were fooled by a Jack Russell called Jack, who wanted to get married in the castle. Jack locked the two silly Alsations outside the gates while he and the bride went inside. They got the sack after that, and were looking for guard work until they came here. I think old Henry took pity on them and gave them this job.”

Rocky got up from the settee and chewed contently on the bone. He was very grateful to Candy for bringing him such a delicious meal.

After a few more days Rocky was feeling much stronger and started to venture out into the fields. Candy asked him if he would like to help with the sheep for a while.

Rocky thought this would be great fun, and watched what Candy did, so that he could do

the same. He ran after any sheep which strayed too far from the flock and barked at them until they ran back to safety.

Just as dusk was falling, Rocky suddenly heard the Alsatians barking loudly.

“What’s up?” he asked Candy who was nearby.

“I think it might be the foxes coming looking for food,” she answered.

Rocky looked up the hill and sure enough he saw twenty or more foxes standing together spying on the sheep. Rocky watched out for the Alsatians, but they were nowhere to be seen. They had run away to hide.

Candy shouted to Rocky to come quickly. They’d better get out of the way before the big foxes got them as well as the sheep.

Rocky was totally confused. The bang on his head was making him think that the foxes

only wanted to play with him and the sheep,



### ROCKY RUN TOWARDS THE FOXES

certainly not to eat them. He couldn't understand why all the dogs were running away. Rocky felt he should go to them, and he ran up the hill. The Alsatians and the Collies watched from their hiding places. At first they said he was mad, then that he was very brave. Before long they thought he was really stupid. He could be killed and eaten. Rocky kept running straight towards the foxes. They



were confused by this behaviour too, as they were used to all dogs and animals running away from them - not AT them. Suddenly the big leader shouted,

“I know that dog. He bit me on the nose one time in the forest, and it is still sore. We had better get out of here quickly because he has about 1000 friends who are probably all hiding in the bushes ready to attack as soon as he reaches us. Run. Run for your lives” shouted the leader. (I’m sure you have now guessed he was Feirdyfox - as Rocky had named him.) When Rocky had chased him and his friends from the forest in Castlerock they had swum across the river into Donegal and started their old tricks again there.

The foxes disappeared from the hill and ran as fast as they could, away from Donegal. In fact they were never seen again.

Rocky came down the hill as all the other dogs rushed to meet him.

“You are so brave, Tiger. I don’t think a real tiger would have been half as courageous as you,” barked Candy. Then they noticed Rocky was crying.

“What’s wrong?” Candy and Ruby asked together, “Why are you crying?”

Rocky answered sobbing,

“They all ran away and wouldn’t play with me. I don’t think they like me!”

The four dogs simply looked at each other thinking that he was a very strange dog indeed.

=====

Over the next few weeks Rocky was feeling a lot better. However he still couldn’t remember anything that had happened in the past. He now answered to “Tiger,” as if it was his real name. He got on very well with the other dogs, especially Candy. Candy would

show Tiger how to round up the sheep and move them into different fields, and how to get them into a sheep pen when old Henry needed to count them, or at shearing time.



Although Rocky had lost his memory he was still very intelligent and carefully watched everything Candy did. In his spare time Rocky would play with some of the sheep and learnt some of their language. The different sounds they made to each other meant different things, in the same way humans use words to communicate. They made other noises.

“It won’t be long until the trials now, Tiger,” Candy told him.

“What trials are you talking about?”

“The yearly sheep dog trials! Every year the best dogs are chosen by their owners to go to the big town of Donegal. There they take part in the sheep dog trials competition. Ruby and I go every year. Ruby won last year, and I won two years before that. So you see why we look forward to it coming up next month. Old Henry always gives us a really good bath, and makes us smell nice for the event. If we win we get a beautiful bow to wear in our hair. I think Henry maybe gets some money, but that’s no use to us.”

“Well, good luck to you both,” answered Rocky, “Maybe I’ll be allowed to come and watch you do your stuff.”

“That would be great. I am sure Henry will take you with him.”

Two days before the trials began there was a terrible storm – with lots of loud thunder and lighting. The sheep were very frightened and broke out of their pen. They ran around the hill and into the fields nearby. Some of them fell into a river which ran alongside one of the fields. Rocky and the collies jumped in to rescue them. They worked hard all night, pulling the sheep from the river. The two stupid Alsatians just stood by and watched, saying,

“We’re very sorry but we can’t swim.” It was next morning before the storm subsided.

Luckily the dogs had got all the sheep out of the river and back into their pens. Poor Ruby and Candy were not feeling very well. With their thick coats it took them a long time to get dry. Both had got such a chill that they caught flu. The pair were coughing, shivering, and had a high temperature. Henry looked at them and said,

“You two better stay in bed for a week. I will get some medicine from the vet.” Then he mumbled “Now what am I going to do about

the trials tomorrow? I will have to cancel my entry. What a pity. I could do with the prize money to buy some food for myself and the dogs.”

“I’ll go in their place,” barked Rocky. “I may not win but I’ll give it a good try if you would allow me,” he told Henry.

“A mongrel dog going to the sheep trials!” shouted Henry, “You must be joking! I have never heard of such a thing. I would be a laughing stock. NO!! I would rather cancel my entry.”

Rocky barked back as loudly as he could,

“I am NOT a mongrel. I am a Pedigree Jackabee. Never forget that!” Then he wondered where that idea had come from. “How do I know I’m a Jackabee? Maybe my memory is starting to come back.”

“My name is Rocky,” he barked again, “NOT Tiger. That’s all I can remember for now, but I know the rest will all come back to me soon.

Anyway, what's wrong with a pedigree Jackabee going to the trials? I can herd those sheep every bit as well as any collie!"

"So he can," joined in Ruby and Candy. "You should give him a chance."

"Get back to bed straight away you pair," ordered Henry. "If you don't, I'll put you both out to work in the fields."

"Sorry," barked the collies, "all the shouting and barking woke us up."

Old Henry looked at Rocky,

"Ok then. You can try, but just don't make a fool out of me!"

"I won't," barked Rocky, "I'll do my very best. Must run along now. There's something to do."

Rocky ran out of the farmhouse and into the sheep pen. Now that he could communicate with the sheep he was able to tell them what was happening tomorrow. - Twenty of them

would be chosen to go to the big town for the competition, and it was himself who was to control them in and out of the pens. If they did as they were told he would take them to the highest field on the mountain, where all the juicy long green grass grew. He would let them feed all day, as a treat for being good.

“We will behave,” baa,ed the sheep, “We will do everything you ask.”

At the sheep trials everyone started laughing when Rocky came into the ring.

“Look at that silly dog! Old Henry must be crazy if he thinks that mongrel has a hope of winning.”

Rocky looked straight at the farmer who called him Mongrel.

“I’ll remember you,” he thought.

The sheep were brought in, twenty of the best from the herd. Rocky gave them a wink, and



barked an order for them to go into pen number three.



The sheep quietly lined up in rows of two and walked into the pen. Rocky gave another order, and again the sheep did exactly as they were told. He gave lots more orders and all the sheep behaved like soldiers marching on parade. Finally Rocky, just for fun, told all the sheep to give a bow and walk out of the ring backwards. Before they left they were all to turn around, lift their tails, and blow a big puff

at the nasty farmer who had called Rocky a mongrel.

How the crowd cheered and cheered. They stood up and clapped their hands, while laughing at the nasty farmer, still surrounded in a cloud of nasty smelling gas.

“That’s the best show we have ever been to. How did you train a dog, and all those sheep, to do such tricks Henry? You win all the prizes here today!”

Old Henry was delighted. He couldn’t wait to get back home to tell the others. Candy and Ruby laughed so much they began to feel much better. As for Rocky, he was delighted that everyone was happy. He kept his promise and brought all the sheep up to the top field, where the grass was juiciest and best. He had a great view from up there. As he looked down he saw a troop of caravans being pulled along by strong horses. Some men were walking alongside them.

“I think I have seen this somewhere before. It looks a bit familiar.” Rocky tried and tried to think, but just couldn’t remember. The sheep were happily grazing on the grass. There were no foxes to disturb them, so Rocky decided to run down towards the caravans. It took him about ten minutes at top speed to run down the mountain, before he reached the first of the troop.

To his surprise, a voice shouted,

“HI ROCKY. What are you doing up here? You’re so far away from home.”

“Do you know me?”

“Of course we all know you. We met at Castlerock when we were camping there. You were with another dog called Betsy, and a cat. I think it’s name was Cork-tree, or Cork-lee, or maybe it was Corky. Yes, that’s it, Corky.” said the gipsy.

“No, I am sorry, I don’t remember anything,” sighed Rocky. “I think I must have had an

accident or something. I have lost my memory. Only a few things are beginning to come back to me now.”

“Well, don’t worry,” another gipsy said. This time it was Remo who had come up to see why the caravan had stopped. “We will look after you and take you home.”

“Great! I love it here on the farm, but I really want to go back home to see all my friends - that’s if I did have any friends.”

“You have lots of them Rocky, but you had better explain to those in the farmhouse that you will be leaving with us today. Mind you we have a long way to travel, as we are on our way to the annual gipsy festival in Limerick. Limerick is right at the bottom of Ireland, and that’s where we go every year around this time.” Rocky ran back up the hill and rounded up the sheep. He took them to their pen and left them safely inside. Next he went into the farmhouse, where all the dogs were sitting

beside a warm log fire. Old Henry was rocking in his chair.

“Hi Tiger,” said Henry.

“I told you my real name is Rocky, NOT Tiger. Call me Rocky now. Anyway, I have come to tell you all that I’m leaving with the gipsies to find my own home in Castlerock. I want to thank you all for looking after me, but now I must leave here.”

“I suppose a dog has got to do what a dog has got to do. Good luck Rocky. We all hope you find your own family again,” replied Old Henry.

“Yes good luck,” all the dogs barked at once, “We will all miss you a lot.”

“Goodbye for now. I may call and see you all someday in the future.”

“That would be great,” barked Candy, with a little tear in her eye. The other dogs had

noticed Candy had fallen in love with Rocky, and she really didn't want him to go away.

Rocky turned and ran back down the hill to where the gypsies were waiting. He jumped up into the first caravan, and asked,

“What is this festival you were telling me about?”

“It's the biggest event in the gypsy calendar,” the gypsy king announced.

“Even bigger than Christmas?” inquired Rocky.

“Well, let's say it's different from Christmas,” chimed in Remo, (the boy Rocky had met on the beach in Castlerock.)

“We all have great fun singing and dancing. There are also lots of games to play with the other gypsy families.”

“Are there any dogs there for me to play with?” Rocky wondered

“Of course there are! Many of the families have dogs, but some of them can be quite mean.”

“I know it’s a long way to Limerick, so where will we be stopping for lunch?”

“We will be stopping soon at that forest up ahead,” spoke up the King. Rocky was told his name was Giorgio, but he liked to be called King, and that’s why everyone did.

“Ok King,” barked Rocky, “Thank you.”

The caravans rolled up to a clearing in the forest and formed a circle. The king climbed down from his seat and started giving out the camp orders.

“We will stay here tonight,” shouted the king. “Rocky and Remo go and gather wood for the fire. Torn-pants and Ruff-neck, you go find good food for us to eat. The rest of you - set out the tables, and start playing some music.”

“Those are funny names those two have,” said Rocky.

“You’re right,” answered Remo, “We all have weird names. Luckily mine isn’t too bad.”

“Well I think it’s a nice name, Remo. It sort of sounds Italian” said Rocky.

“We had better start gathering these sticks and logs for the fire, or the king will be angry with us, and we don’t want that to happen. Better to keep in his good books.”

Remo and Rocky went deep into the woods and gathered lots of wood to start a fire. They stopped and heard a sort of moaning noise coming from behind a tree. Rocky and Remo looked at each other, not too sure what to do. Both were feeling a little bit frightened.

“We had better go and take a look,” whispered Rocky.

“What’ll we do if it’s a lion, or maybe a tiger hiding in the bushes?”



“Don’t be silly Remo. There are no lions or tigers in Ireland, unless they are in a zoo or maybe a circus.”

“It could be one that has escaped,” squeaked Remo.

“Oh give over!” said Rocky, getting impatient, “I’m going to see what all this moaning is about.”

Rocky moved slowly towards the tree and peeped round behind it. To his amazement he saw a little boy lying in the grass. The boy’s foot was caught in a trap that had been set for a fox. He wasn’t seriously hurt, but nevertheless he couldn’t get his foot free. The rope had tightened around his ankle, making it swell a lot. The boy would not be able to walk on it.

“How long have you been here?” asked Remo, feeling brave now that he knew there weren’t any lions or tigers about.

“I have been here all night, and I am very sore and hungry. Can you help me please?”

“Of course we can,” Rocky assured him.

Rocky bit through the rope in a second, and the boy’s foot was free.

“How will we be able to get him back to camp?”

“You will have to carry him on your back,” barked Rocky.

“But what about the wood for the fire?”

Remo was worried in case the king might get angry with him.

“Don’t worry about the wood. Just pile it all here, and I will take some back to start the fire going. I’ll bring some of the gypsies back with me to help carry the rest of the wood.”

Rocky grabbed some of the sticks in his mouth and ran back to camp. He told the king about what that had happened.

“You’re a good dog, Rocky. I will tell Torn-pants and Ruff-neck to help gather more wood, seeing as they have already brought back enough food for our dinner tonight. You go now and lead the way.”

Rocky started to run into the woods.

“Hey Rocky, slow down a bit,” shouted Ruff-neck. “We have only two feet, not four like you.”

Rocky slowed down to let the pair catch up. They went on for another half a mile before Rocky stopped beside the wood pile. Remo had by now set off for camp with the boy on his back. Ruff-neck and Torn-pants lifted all the wood between them, and Rocky showed them the quickest way back. When they arrived the little boy was lying down covered with a blanket, close to the newly lit fire.

“What is your name little boy?” asked the King.

“I’m called John. Who are you, and who are all these people?” asked John.

“I am the king. These people are my gypsy friends and family. Now it’s time you told me where you live, and what are you doing here in the forest at night?”

“I live with my old aunt. She’s horrible. She hits me a lot, even if I’m doing nothing wrong. I am running away from her. I was hoping to find my way to Limerick. I know some friends there who will look after me.”

“Where are your Mother and Father,” asked the king.

“I don’t know,” said the boy with tears in his eyes. “They left me with my aunt and told me to be a good boy. They promised they would be back soon, but they have never come back.”

“You can stay with us,” said the king, “And when your foot is better you can help with the washing up!”

“Thank you so much Mr King,” shouted the boy. He was so relieved to be staying with the gypsies.

Rocky went over to the boy and guess what he told him,

“I’m lost as well, and the gypsies are good enough to help me too.”

That night they all had lots of cooked magpie and roast rabbit to eat, caught by Ruffneck and Tornpants in the forest. After dinner the king ordered lemonade for everyone from his special drinks caravan. The men brought out their guitars and violins, while the girls danced until dawn.

“What a great life this is,” thought Rocky.

Next morning they all got up late. In fact it was about eleven o’clock in the morning before they woke. There was still a lot of clearing up to do, and breakfast to make. When all the chores were done it was time to get on the road once again.

“This is what I like about the gypsy life. You have no idea where you might end up tomorrow, or even tonight,” barked Rocky.

The caravans trundled on their way, with everyone singing along as they went.

“Look!” shouted John, “There’s a sign for Limerick – it’s only another sixty miles away.”

“Oh dear,” said the king, “We can only cover about fifteen miles per day. It’s going to take us another four days to get there. We will be too late, unless we can get there faster, or find a shorter route. The festival starts in three days time.”

“Can’t you make the horses go any faster King?” Rocky asked.

“I can’t do that. They are old and tired. We have to travel at their pace.”

Rocky tried to think of a way that they could get to Limerick a bit faster, but his mind was a blank. He just didn’t know how to help them.

Later that day a big fancy car passed them on the road. Suddenly it stopped in front of the caravans. The driver, a very well dressed gentleman, wearing a fur coat, with the lord mayor's chain of office around his neck, stepped out onto the road and waved to the gypsies to stop. When the caravans had all pulled up he addressed the King saying,

“Dear King, I am the Lord Mayor of Limerick town. I live not far from here in the manor house. I was wondering if you have seen a little boy who's ten years old. He's my son and he has run away again. He just will not go to school, and keeps leaving home. Last time we found him in Dublin. He told the people who had given him a lift that he was living with an old aunt who beat him every day.”

“Come here John,” shouted the King.

Once he heard his father's voice, John jumped down from the caravan and ran as fast as he could, shouting, “No I am NOT coming back. I hate school.”

Rocky was first to catch up with him.

“Stop right now John!” He barked, “You know you can’t get away. You can never outrun me, and I will bring you back.”

John stopped running and sat down.

“I hate school, Rocky.”

Well, I suppose most kids do, but you don’t want to grow up being stupid now, do you.”

“No I don’t,” John agreed.

“If I can get the King, and your Dad, to promise that the gypsies will call at your house every summer, and let you travel with them for a few days, will you promise to go to school each day?”

“Oh Rocky, I promise I will.”

Rocky came back with John, and told his dad and the King about the plan.

“Of course we will call with you each year, on our way to the Limerick Gypsy Festival,”



agreed the King. John's dad thought it was a great idea too.

"Are you lot on your way to the festival in Limerick now?" asked the mayor.

"We are, but I doubt if we'll make it in time, as our horses are very old and tired."

"Don't worry about that. Turn around and follow me to the manor. I have lots of strong horses looking for a job. I'll lend you some of them to pull your caravans. You can leave your own horses in my fields while you're away. The rest will do them good."

"That's really generous of you. Thank you," said the King.

"Well, after all, you were very kind to my son. I am only returning the favour. Anyway I want you all to be at the festival. I will also be there to give out some of the prize money."

The caravans all turned around and followed the big car slowly back to the manor house. It

was a mile along the road, but the driveway leading to the manor seemed to be about two miles long. Fortunately they didn't need to walk the whole way. The mayor stopped at one of the fields. Rocky and all the gypsies looked across the fence. They saw about thirty of the best and strongest horses ever.



“Take your pick,” said the mayor. “You will need six I believe - one to pull each caravan.”

The gypsies soon changed over the horses. The new ones were full of energy and ready to go, while the old ones were glad to get into the field for a well deserved rest.

They thanked the lord mayor again, and headed off down the road. The horses were pulling and tugging, wanting to go ever so fast.

The King let them trot, and soon the caravans were racing along.

“We’ll be there in plenty of time after all,” shouted the King, as he steered his horse around the bends on the road.

Even some of the cars were pulling in to let the caravans rush past.

“I hope we don’t crash at this speed,” barked Rocky. He could see that the King and all the gypsies were having great fun. The King took a hard turn at the next bend. In front of him was a very steep hill.

“Oh no,” Rocky shouted, “He’ll never make it at this speed.”

Sure enough, the horse began to panic and did it’s best to stop, but the weight of the caravan

was too much behind him. It tried to turn into a field and ended up coming free from its harness. The caravan careered on down the hill at top speed. Rocky and the King were terrified. There was nothing they could do to save themselves. Suddenly, when the road took another turn, they saw an open gate in front of them. The caravan luckily plunged straight through the gate, into the field. It ended up in a huge haystack. Rocky and the King were hurled out over the top of the haystack and landed in a duck pond.



“Thank goodness we aren’t hurt. Only a few bruises and a muddy faces,” said the King.

As he was speaking, the ducks were getting very cross. What were a dog and a man doing in their pond? They quacked and quacked, then started to peck at Rocky and the King.

“Hey ducks,” shouted the King, “Don’t you know who I am? I am King of the gypsies!”

The ducks did not really care if he was King of all Ireland. They just wanted him and Rocky out of their home. The pair jumped out of the pond and ran up the field, with the ducks in hot pursuit, pecking at their bottoms. When they were far enough away from them, Rocky and the King surveyed the damage on the caravan.

“We will never get this repaired.”

“You’re right,” agreed Rocky, “We’ll have to travel with one of the others.”

They waited at the side of the road until the next caravan came along. It happened to be Ruff-neck and Torn-pants' caravan.

“Can we have a lift with you?” Rocky asked, “Our caravan has crashed in that field.”

“Of course you can. It will be a pleasure to have the King and yourself onboard with us,” answered Ruff-neck.

Their horse followed, tied on to the back. It was still a little shaken from the ordeal.

Next stop was a little town called Bundoran. It was a seaside town on the west coast. The King ordered that all the caravans be parked near the beach. That way the gypsies could go for a swim, and wash in the cool water. Rocky jumped in with them, splashing about and playing with the others. Later that day, at supper time, it was Rocky and Remo's turn to fetch some food for the gypsies, while Ruff-neck and Torn-pants gathered the fire wood.

“What could we have for supper?” wondered Remo. “It doesn’t look as if there are any chickens for us to catch here.”

“There might not be, but there’s still plenty of food.”

“I jolly well can’t see it,” said Remo, looking a bit puzzled.

“In the rock pools there will be lots of little fish and crabs to eat. They are delicious. Come with me and I’ll show you how to catch them. I always had lots of fun in Whitehead hunting for crabs and things.”

Suddenly Rocky thought,

“I said Whitehead! Why did I say that? Maybe I have been there before, or could have even lived there. Someone may know me, who can tell me who I really am, and who I belong to. The gypsies also mentioned a place called Castlerock. Maybe I have stayed there too.

Rocky dismissed the idea for the time being. He was too busy showing Remo how to catch crabs.

“Now watch carefully Remo. I’ll show you how it’s done.”

Rocky looked into a deep pool of seawater among the rocks. He spied a huge crab sitting on the bottom. Rocky put his paw into the water and moved it about slowly. The big crab thought it was food which had fallen into the pool. It crawled up the side of the rocks. Closer and closer it came to where the food (as he thought) was. When the crab was within range, Rocky scooped him out and into their bucket in one swipe.

“Got you,” he barked happily. “Now you try it Remo.”

Remo wiggled his finger in another pool which also had a large crab. He watched as the crab slowly climbed up the rocks to investigate the ripples in the water. Suddenly the crab lounged forward, too quickly for



Remo. The crab caught hold of Remo's little finger in its sharp claws. Remo squealed as the crab tightened its grip. He pulled his hand out of the water and shook it hard from side to side. The crab fell off, straight into the bucket.

"Well done," barked Rocky, laughing.

"You didn't tell me it was so painful when they nip you!" shouted Remo.

"I couldn't tell you in case you were too afraid to try. Anyway, it's only a little scratch. Look at the lovely crab you have to eat for dinner."

"Let's look in some of the other pools," said Remo, now that he had lost his fear.

The pair walked across the rocks looking into the pools for anything the sea had left behind. Unexpectedly Rocky noticed a very bright multicoloured ball, just under the surface of the water, in one of the larger pools.



“Hey look at this. Come over here. It’s a ball. We could play with on the beach later.”

Remo came over to where Rocky had found the ball.

“Let’s get it out and take it home.”

Rocky looked more closely at the ball in the water.

“That’s funny,” he said, “It’s not floating to the surface like other balls. Instead it’s staying about half way down.”

Rocky jumped into the pool and pulled the ball out onto the rocks.

“It’s really beautiful. It’s so light you would nearly think it was made of fish skins. That’s what’s giving it the dazzling colours, when the sunlight catches it. This is no ordinary ball.” barked Rocky, puzzled.

“Maybe it has come from outer space. It might even have come from the moon. Who knows, some little boy may have kicked it too hard from another planet, and it has fallen off and landed here.”

“Don’t talk nonsense, Remo. Be serious. Someone has lost this ball. It certainly is a very special one. We will have to try to find its owner.”

Just as Rocky finished speaking, they both heard a voice, a strange, bubbly voice. It sounded like the noise you make in a bath. Neither of them had ever heard a voice like that before.

“That’s my ball”, spoke the voice. “There was a big storm here two nights ago. It took my ball away as I was playing. I followed it all the way here and now I am lost.”

“I can’t see you,” barked Rocky. “Who are you? Where are you?”

“My name is Miriam. I am in the sea, behind you. I’m only seven, and it’s my birthday today. I am so sad because I can’t find my mum or dad anywhere.”

Rocky and Remo looked all around.

Suddenly Remo shouted,

“Look! There in the water - just by that big rock.”

“It’s a girl with long hair,” barked Rocky. He couldn’t believe what he was seeing.

“Are you ok? Can we help you out of the water? It must be very cold in there.”

“I can’t live out of the water, in the same way you can’t live in the water,” Miriam explained. “I live here because I am a mermaid.”

“A mermaid, a mermaid,” Rocky muttered over and over again. “I have heard of mermaids, but never believed they really existed.”

“Well I had heard about humans, but until now I never thought they were real either. Are you a human?” she asked Rocky.

“No I’m a dog, but Remo is human.”

“Can you please help me find my Mum and dad?” I have lots of brothers and sisters out there somewhere too. “

“Of course we will help,” Rocky promised, although he didn’t really know what he was going to do. He could go into the water, but not for as long as a mermaid could.

Rocky threw the ball back to Miriam and told her to stay around. He and Remo were going

to find a boat to help her find her family. They both ran off to the beach where the caravans were parked. They gave the crabs to the King to cook, while quickly telling him about their experience, and who they had met. The king laughed.

“Mermaids indeed! Next you’ll be telling me there are gnomes in the forest, and trees that can talk.”

“I could tell you all right, but you are old now, and would never believe a word I say.”

Rocky asked the king to keep some crab for Remo and himself, before running along the beach to where he had noticed a rowing boat lying in an old man’s garden.

“Hi,” barked Rocky to the man sitting on the unturned boat. Would you lend us your boat for a short time please? We need to help a mermaid find her family.”

The old man looked curiously at Rocky and Remo for a while. Finally, he said,



“I will, but I don’t think it’s very seaworthy. It’s very old - just like me. I used to go fishing in it when I was a boy. One day, when I was out along the sand bank over there, catching fish, I saw a mermaid. At least I thought it was one. She was really beautiful, with long blonde hair and deep blue eyes. I told everyone in the village about her, but they only laughed. I never did see her again. So I do believe you when you tell me you have seen one. She needs help, so please take my boat.

Rocky, Remo, and the old man half pushed, half carried the boat down to the sea. Rocky and Remo jumped in, and Remo rowed quickly towards the rocks. The old man

wished them good luck as they went out to sea.

“Look! There she is Remo, between those two large peaks.” Rocky pointed.

“I see her now.” Remo rowed towards her. “Come on, jump in,” he shouted as he got closer.

“No I don’t need too. I can swim alongside you, pushing my ball.”

Rocky told Remo to row the boat towards the sand bank, where the old man said he had seen a mermaid many years ago. Remo did, and it wasn’t long until they reached the sand.

“Now we’ll get out of the boat and swim under water to see if we find any other mermaids.” They tied the boat to a log tangled on the sandbank by seaweed.

“That should be safe until we get back,” said Rocky. The trio slowly got into the water. It was very cold in such deep water. Rocky got a



fright when a huge shark swam past, rubbing its fins against his tail.

“Don’t be frightened,” bubbled Miriam, “It’s a friendly, basking shark. They don’t eat meat, so you are safe.” Miriam was able to stay underwater for as long as she wanted, but Rocky and Remo had to keep coming up for air. Down they went again, and again, swimming close to the sand bank. It was really rocks under water with sand above sea level. Rocky searched around, but could not see any other mermaids.

“We may give up,” he bubbled to Remo under water. “We will have to go home. It’s getting dark now and the King will be worried about us.” Rocky popped his head out of the water. He was horrified to see the little boat they depended on sinking.

“The old man did say it wasn’t very sea worthy. Remember?” said Remo.

“Yes I do. Now what are we going to do? We will be stuck on this sand bank until morning. What will happen when the tide comes in? We will both be drowned.”

“Better start swimming for land now, while there is still some light.” They bid Miriam goodbye, and headed towards the shore.

“Will you come back tomorrow, and help me find my mum and dad?”

“We’ll come tomorrow morning,” Rocky shouted back, “That’s if we ever make it to shore! It’s a long distance to swim.”

After swimming for an hour it was getting very dark. Rocky and Remo were really tired now, and couldn’t see the shore anymore.

“We must have missed the shore line in the dark. Maybe we have been swimming the wrong way.”

“I can’t go any further, Rocky. You go on. Leave me behind.”

“I’m exhausted too.” Rocky could hardly bark anymore.

“We may as well give up. We are going to drown anyway.”

They both stopped swimming, and started to sink in the dark water. Rocky looked up to the sky and the stars, thinking how nice they looked. The water covered his mouth and eyes, so he could no longer see anything. He felt Remo sinking beside him. At least, he thought it was Remo. Suddenly he felt two strong arms around him, pulling him to the surface. He came up so fast he shot straight out of the water, and splashed back down again. He looked around and saw Remo floating beside him. Something was holding them up, preventing them from sinking. Whatever had a hold of them? It moved quickly and quietly through the water until it reached the beach. Rocky and Remo were now close enough to walk to safety. They ran up the beach and looked around, just in time

to see three heads looking out of the water,  
and six arms waving them goodbye.

Then they heard a voice saying,

“Thank you Rocky and Remo for helping me  
find my family. If you had not swum off  
course, I would never have found them.”

“We are so happy for you. It’s as well for us  
that your mum and dad saw us drowning.  
They came to our rescue, and saved us. We  
thank you!” Remo shouted back.

“It’s time to have some dinner now, Remo.”

“Dinner? It’s more like breakfast at this time.”

They both laughed as they ran up the beach  
towards the caravans. The king had left some  
crab for them, as he promised. As soon as they  
had eaten they went off to bed, feeling very  
happy with the day’s outcome.

---

Next morning, breakfast was sausages, egg, and bacon. (Rocky's favourite start to the day). After eating, they all packed their belongings and headed along the road again towards Limerick. The gypsies were a very happy group of people. They never had much money or goods, but they found a great contentment by living simply. Some sang, while others played tunes on their violins and guitars. The caravans rolled along the bumpy, bendy roads towards the gypsy festival. It was to start tomorrow morning. All over Ireland other groups of caravans and gypsies headed in the same direction. Everyone was looking forward to having lots of fun and laughter. The festival, which lasts a week, has lots of games, and competitions. Some choose who has the best coloured caravan, or who has the most well trained horses. Many other events are held as well. Remo was telling Rocky about some of the other gypsy dogs that come to the festival. There was one in particular called Surge. Surge was a Tibetan mountain dog. He was very strong, and was always

starting fights between other dogs. Remo went on to say,

“It’s better to stay clear of Surge, because he’s very bad tempered and nasty. Most other dogs are very friendly. They only want to play together.”

Rocky interrupted him saying,

“Look Remo, over there in front of us. I think that’s the lord mayor’s car, parked on the verge.”

“It is indeed. It looks as if he has come off the road.”

When they reached the car they saw that it had skidded on some wet, freshly cut grass which was scattered all over the road. The mayor was still sitting in the driver’s seat, looking a bit dazed and shocked. Rocky shook him and asked if he was all right.

“I am ok,” agreed the mayor. “I was driving a bit too quickly, and skidded on that grass.

Luckily for me, I just ran into the hedge, not a wall, or a tree, or something worse.”



Torn-pants and Ruff-neck were next on the scene. They helped the mayor out of his car. He had a few bruises, but otherwise was ok. The mayor wasn't worried about himself, or the car. All he was concerned about was getting to the festival on time tomorrow morning.

“It's another thirty miles to Limerick from here. How am I to get there on time? It's too

far to walk, and there are hardly any cars on this road to give me a lift.”

“Don’t worry,” chimed in the King, “You can travel with us. We’ll be there by tomorrow morning.”

“Thank you so much,” answered the Lord Mayor. “You and your people are very kind.”

The mayor climbed up beside Rocky and Remo, into the caravan. They heard Tornpants giving the order to the horses to walk on, and off they went. The mayor was now feeling a lot better and chatted with the King about the olden days in the country. The two were about the same age, so they both remembered many events through the years, which had affected them in different ways.

“Why did you become a gypsy?” asked the mayor.

“I was born into a rich family. My father owned many factories throughout England and Ireland. He wanted me to work there, but



I just wanted to feel free. I couldn't bear sitting in an office all day. I dreamed of the open landscape, the mountains, the green valleys, and the blue seas. I needed to enjoy all that God made for us. How about you? How did you become mayor?" asked the King.

"I was not born into a rich family like you. Mine was a very poor one. It was hard for my parents to earn enough money to keep us. They worked in one of the factories you talk about, from early morning to late at night. I saw the owners driving the best cars, and buying the best food at the markets. Their workers, who made all the money for them, had to manage on whatever they got. I studied hard at school, and listened to whatever my teachers said. I wanted to be educated enough to go into politics. I hoped to change things, and help the poor people. Now I have been elected Lord Mayor of Limerick because the people appreciate what I have achieved for them."

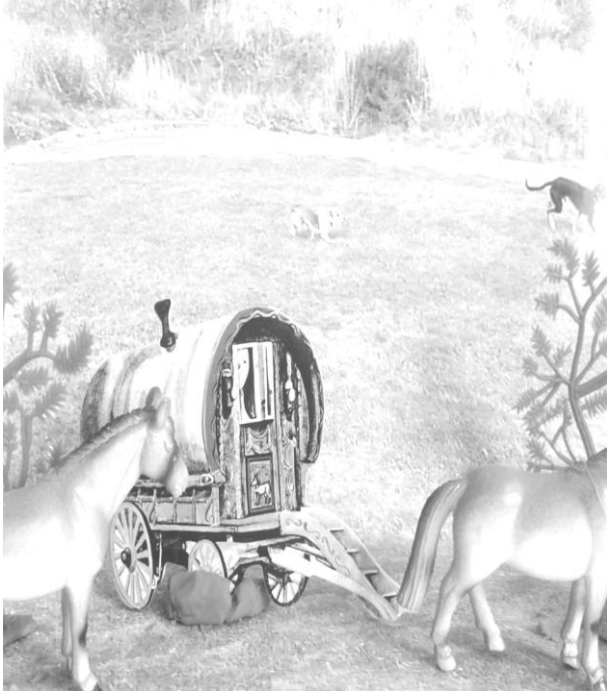
When the mayor stopped talking the caravans stopped too.

Torn-pants shouted to the King,

“This looks like a perfect place to stop for the night. It has a good grassy field for the horses to feed, and space for us to camp .”

“Perfect,” shouted the King, “Let’s all move the caravans into a circle, and gather some wood for the fire.”

The mayor jumped down from the caravan and helped Torn-pants and Ruff-neck collect wood. Rocky and Remo were again sent to find more food. Soon the fire was raging in the middle of the caravans, and everyone was eating some of the rabbit and wild duck that Rocky had caught. After dinner the music, singing and dancing were ready to start.



The gypsies were setting up for the night and

Rocky was playing with one of his friends.

The mayor was really enjoying it all. He told Rocky he was very happy to be with the gypsies. He felt it was a great life. Everyone was having such a good time they never noticed the four beady eyes, watching them from the bushes. They were two robbers. One

was called Bottoms-up, because he was always falling over, and his bottom was in the air more often than his head! The other was called Clobber-feet. He made so much noise when he ran that all his friends called him Clobber-feet. They were part of a gang of robbers, going to the festival to see what they could steal.

“I have heard that all Lord Mayors have a golden chain of office that they hang around their necks during official occasions,” whispered Clobber-feet.

“That’s true,” said Bottoms-up. “It must be in the caravan. Follow me, and try to be quiet. We will try stealing it while everyone is dancing and having fun”

Bottoms -up crept slowly towards the caravan the lord mayor had come out from. Clobber-feet followed behind, going clunk, clunk, clunk, with his big feet.

“Stay here,” whispered Bottoms-up. “You are making too much noise. The gypsies will hear your footsteps.”

Bottoms-up entered the caravan without being seen. He looked around everywhere, until he saw a case on the floor beside the bed. On the case were the initials L.M.

“That must be it,” he thought, and opened the case. There it was - a heavy gold chain. Bottoms-up put the chain into his coat pocket, and peeped out of the caravan. Nobody had seen him. He crept down and was sneaking passed, when he noticed that somebody had left six delicious sausages, on a plate beside the fire. The flames were almost out bynow. Bottoms-up could not resist the temptation. He snatched two of the sausages. He thought they tasted so good he put the rest in his pocket for later. It was almost midnight now, and all the gypsies were retiring to bed. Rocky was almost asleep when he suddenly heard a shout.

“My gold chain of office has been stolen!”  
shouted the mayor.

The mayor had been about to polish it, for the ceremony tomorrow; when he realised it was missing.

“Who took my chain?” he bellowed. “It must have been one of you gypsies. I thought you were honest people.”

“We are,” shouted the King. “Don’t blame anyone of us. Get your facts right first.”

Rocky arrived to find out what was going on.

“Someone has stolen my gold chain. It’s very valuable you know,” said the mayor, as he started to calm down a little.

“Don’t worry. We’ll find the thief, and recover your chain for you”.

Rocky started to sniff about the caravan. He put his nose into the case where the gold chain had been. Then he walked towards the

door, and down the caravan steps. Next he went over to where the fire had been.

“Someone has been here, not long ago, and has stolen the sausages I left on a plate for my breakfast,” barked Rocky. “Now I can smell them being taken this way into the woods. Remo follow me. We’ll find this sausage stealer.”

Rocky was more annoyed about someone taking his sausages than he was about the gold chain.

“I can’t eat a gold chain, but I do love eating lots of tasty sausages,” he thought sadly..

When they were about a mile into the woods, they heard two men laughing. Rocky could smell sausages cooking.

“I think we have found him, and his partners,” whispered Rocky to Remo, “Keep very still while I look into their camp. I need to find out how many of them there are.”

Rocky quietly sneaked towards the camp fire. The smell of sausages was making him hungry again.

“Just how dare they steal my breakfast,” he thought.

When Rocky came back he told Remo that there were four men. He felt sure they would be spending the rest of the night here. He told Remo to run back to the gypsy camp, and fetch Torn-pants and Ruff-neck, along with the long rope, in the back of the caravan. Remo ran as fast as he could, and quickly returned with help.

“Right, there is only one way those robbers can come out of their den. They must come past this big tree. I want you, Ruff-neck, to pull down that branch, until it touches the ground. When it does, Torn-pants, you tie the rope to it, very tightly. We will make a lasso, and attach it to the rope. When a robber steps into it, the branch will be freed. It should



spring back up, hopefully, and catch the robber by the leg.”

“What a great plan Rocky. Let’s get it started.”

Rough-neck and Torn-pants did as Rocky told them. Rocky and Remo made the lasso and tied it to the rope. The trap was now set.

“Come on boys. Let’s make lots of noise, and frighten these robbers,” barked Rocky.

They all shouted and yelled together at the top of their voices. The robbers jumped up, totally bewildered by the sounds come from the woods. None of them could see what was causing the racket. They all started to run towards the exit - Bottoms-up first. He ran straight into the trap. Both his feet were caught in the lasso, and as the rope came loose, the branch sprung up. The others were so frightened, they dashed past him quickly. Rocky and Remo came right up to him, hanging from the branch.

“What’s your name, thief?” Rocky asked.

“It’s Bottoms-up,” said the thief nervously.

“Well,” laughed Rocky, “You certainly are bottoms up now alright.”

Ruff-neck, Torn-pants, and Remo were laughing in the woods. They thought that was such a funny joke.

In their rush to escape, the thieves had forgotten to lift the golden chain. Rocky and Remo were able to bring it back safely to the Lord Mayor.

The Mayor was so thankful, that he told the King to keep the horses he had lent to the gypsies, saying,

“Your horses are getting a bit old now. It would be better for them to spend their days simply grazing in my fields.”

After thanking the Lord Mayor, the King suggested they all get some sleep. Everyone had had too much excitement, and it would be

morning soon. They all needed to be in Limerick early next day.

Rocky woke at dawn. It was just after 5am, and he had promised to awaken the king early. The caravans should be on the road soon, if they wanted to arrive in Limerick by 9 o'clock. The festival would be starting then. They all wanted to get a good place, to park the caravans and rest the horses.

Rocky barked loudly into the King's ear, which made him jump with fright.

"Rocky I did say, "Waken me." NOT deafen me!"

He reluctantly climbed out of his bunk, and washed his face.

"Ah, that's better. Sorry for shouting at you Rocky. I like to waken up gently in the mornings. Right, let's get the rest of the team up now."

Rocky and the King went around all the caravans, knocking on the doors, shouting,

“Get up, lazy-bones.” Rocky thought it was great fun, getting everyone out of bed early.

Soon breakfast was ready. There were sausages, bacon, and eggs. The sun was beginning to light up the sky, and the whole scene was like a beautiful oil painting. The Mayor was enjoying his bacon and eggs, looking at the sky and saying over and over again,

“This is the life. I wish I had joined up with the gypsies when I was young.”

“It’s not always as nice as this,” remarked the King. “Most days it’s raining, and in winter it can get very cold, sleeping in a caravan. We have to hunt for food in the woods every day. You can go to your fridge, or freezer and lift out whatever you fancy eating.”

“That’s true,” agreed the mayor, “It’s a simple life, but it can be a hard one.”

The King now ordered the gypsies,

“If you are all finished, we had better get going. We want to find a good site.”

The Mayor and Rocky gathered the plates, and gave them a quick wash in the stream nearby. Torn-pants and Remo were hitching the horses to the caravans. Ruff-neck, and the others, checked the caravans, to make sure everything was tightly secured for the journey. The King stood, and gave out orders. That was his job.

After a couple of hours travelling, they passed a sign, which told them Limerick was only one mile ahead.

“We are in good time,” said the Mayor, “We should make the first event.”

Another horse and caravan raced up alongside them.

“Get out of the way, slow coach,” bellowed a fat man with a very red face. “Let the best gypsies past first.”

“WE ARE the best gypsies,” the king shouted back, angrily.

“Let’s see about that, during the games!” the fat man bellowed.

Rocky asked the King who the nasty person was.

“That’s another gypsy king, from a different clan. He calls himself Samson, and he can be very rude. His dog Surge is very badly behaved too.”

“I’ve heard of Surge,” barked Rocky. “He’s always fighting with other dogs. I was told to stay away from him.”

“His owner, Samson, does the same thing with other gypsies.”

As the caravan passed, Rocky saw Surge staring out the back. He looked very nasty

indeed. He was a huge black mongrel, who barked and growled at Rocky, until he was out of sight. Rocky didn't bark back. Instead he looked at Surge, thinking how stupid he was. Why waste all his energy barking for no reason. Although he was not afraid of him, Rocky decided it was better to stay clear of Surge. There could be trouble ahead.

They entered Limerick, and followed the signs to the gypsy festival. Fortunately, there were lots of good spaces left. The king ordered that the caravans should form a circle in the next field. There was lots of grass and water for the horses there. All during the day more and more caravans arrived. Old friends greeted each other. All the gypsy dogs, who had met last year, welcomed their friends. Some came over to Rocky to say hello, and Rocky made lots of friends now too.

“Are you now one of us? Are you a gypsy dog?” Sam the cocker spaniel asked him.

“No. I’m only travelling with the gypsies until I find my home. I must regain my memory first,” answered Rocky.

“What happened to you?”

“I think I was knocked down by a car, and hit my head. That must be how I lost my memory.”

“Did you say your name was Rocky?” asked the Spaniel?

“That’s right,” answered Rocky.

“Well, we were passing a place called Castlerock. It’s about eighty miles from here. I noticed they had some posters on the walls, about a lost dog called Rocky. I was wondering if it might be you. They are offering a big reward, of one hundred pounds, to anyone who can find you.”

“Whoa! That’s a lot of money, just for me.”

“Your owners must love you lots,” laughed Sam.



Rocky told the King of the reward. He promised the King the money, if he could bring him to Castlerock when the festival was over. The King agreed to find the place. Not for the sake of the reward, but to make sure Rocky found his rightful family again.

Some of the events had already started. First one was judging which clan had the best kept caravan. The judge, who was the Mayor of Limerick, walked around all the different sites. Finally he announced that MaryAnn, a gypsy queen, had the best kept caravan. It was freshly painted in gold, red, and green. She had put new carpet inside, and fresh curtains on all the windows. It really was beautiful. She definitely deserved to win. All the other gypsies agreed, and applauded as she was given her prize of flowers and chocolates. The only one who didn't clap was Samson. He wanted to win every prize himself. Surge sat beside him, growling at everyone passing by. Rocky met Sam again later and wondered if he wanted to see their

camp site. They both set off together, to have a look around. Sam was feeling very warm. The sun was really hot that day.

“I would love an ice-cream, or something to cool me down a bit,” he barked to Rocky.

“So would I,” said Rocky. As soon as he said that, Sam started to run away as fast as he could.

“Come on Rocky. I see a cat looking, for a chase.”

Rocky was about to join in, when he suddenly thought he recognised the cat.

“I remember now. It’s Zorro.”

“Come back here Sam. That cat is a friend of mine. I met him long ago in some village.”

Sam stopped running, and came back.

“Did you say you were friends with a cat, Rocky? I don’t believe it!”

“I’m friends now with many cats, but this one is very special.”

Zorro had stopped running, and was coming back slowly,

“Is that you Rocky?”

“That’s me alright. It’s great to see you again, Zorro. Is Mr Hawkins with you?”

“We are here for the festival, to sell ice cream. Mr Hawkins comes every year, but I have never seen you here before,” said Zorro.  
(Zorro is a cat Rocky met in the story of The Magic Ice Cream)

“I came here with the gypsies, Zorro. I lost my memory after being knocked down by a car.”

“I suppose you were running across a road without looking out for any cars coming. Silly dog! You know that we cats have nine lives, but dogs and humans who only have one. Be more careful in future,” Zorro lectured.

“Ok, Ok. Don’t keep nagging. I’ll look out in future. I don’t want that to happen again.”

“Is your memory getting better?” asked Zorro.  
“You did remember me.”

“More and more is beginning to come back to me. I know now that I live in a place called Castlerock, or Whitehead. I remember meeting you in a village with no name. I also remember that you and Mr Hawkins sold the most delicious ice cream. Talking about ice cream, my friend Sam and I would adore one, please.”

“So, what are we waiting for? Come with me and I’ll tell Mr Hawkins to make two really special ones, with lots of chocolate on top.”

Rocky asked Sam to go along with Zorro to fetch the ice creams. He wanted to look at some dog bones, on sale at one of the stalls.

“I’ll meet you both in a couple of minutes,” he barked, as they both ran off to fetch the cones.

Rocky studied the bones for a while. He really loved shopping, when it came to sausages, and meaty bones.

“That one looks really juicy. I will get Remo to buy it for my supper.” He was still at the stall, twenty minutes later, when Sam returned. Sam’s fur was badly ruffled, and he had a cut on his left ear.

“Whatever happened to you? Where is my ice cream?”

Sam whimpered back, “It was Surge. We were coming back with the ice cream, when Surge charged towards us, demanding we hand it over. Zorro was so frightened, he ran away, dropping your ice cream. After Surge ate it, he jumped on me, and took my ice cream too. I bumped my head on the ground, and that’s how I cut my ear. He’s such a nasty dog, but he’s too big to argue with.”

Rocky was furious.

“Surge might be big and nasty, but he’s also very stupid. Leave him to me. We’ll teach that dog a lesson. He can’t go around picking on other smaller dogs, and stealing their food. Let’s go back to the caravan now. We’ll take a rest and see Zorro tomorrow. He’ll be at the ice cream van. We can make our plans from there.”

That night the gypsies all gathered together around a huge fire. They barbecued ribs and burgers, washed down with lots of lemonade and coke. Rocky and Sam joined in the fun, and laughed as the gypsies danced and sang merry songs.

Everyone was having a great time, until Surge came, sneaking past the two friends.

“Look,” he said loudly, “There’s that silly dog that never got eating his ice cream.” He walked up to Sam growling, “You had better have some ice cream for me tomorrow - or else! As for your mongrel friend, beside you, he had better have one for me too.”

“I will Surge,” barked Rocky, “Meet me at the ice cream van at three o’clock. I will have the biggest and most delicious chocolate ice cream, all for you Surge.”

“You had better, mongrel,” growled Surge, as he slumped off, to annoy some of the other dogs.

Rocky was now madder than ever.

“How dare he call me a mongrel! I am a pedigree Jackabee.” His brain was so angry that it brought his memory back in a flash. He remembered Mue, Mal, and specially Betsy. He remembered Castlerock and the caravan, then Whitehead, where he went fishing in the rocks.

“I know who I am now. I have to get back as soon as possible, because everyone will be worrying about me.”

Sam just stood in disbelief. Not about remembering things, but about buying Surge a huge ice cream.

“Are you really going to buy that bully an ice cream Rocky?”

“I sure am, and it will be one he will never forget!”

“Wow,” barked Sam, “Can I have one too?”

“I don’t think you would really enjoy this one. I’ll get you a different sort,” laughed Rocky.

At two o’clock Rocky met Zorro beside the ice cream van. He explained his plan about teaching Surge a lesson.

“I’ll make that very special ice cream for him myself,” laughed Zorro, “He deserves something really nice and hot.” Zorro chuckled to himself about calling ice cream hot. That was exactly what he intended to make for Surge. Zorro was going to leave out one of the special ingredients. That way something very strange would happen to Surge when he ate it. He made the ice cream with lots of mustard inside it.



Sure enough, at three o'clock, Surge arrived.

"Hey mongrel," he barked, "Where is this special ice cream you have for me?"

"Right here Surge. It's the biggest one I can get, and it's all yours!"

Surge looked around. Rocky had invited all the other dogs to have ice cream too. They were already sitting around the van enjoying theirs.

"Well then, give it here. After I swallow this, I will then take some of theirs."

Rocky handed him the ice cream. Surge gulped it down in one mouthful. Nothing happened for a moment or two. Then Surge started to turn a strange shade of green. His ears and his tail grew longer and longer. Steam came out of his mouth and nose, because of the hot mustard. The other things happening were due to the magic ice cream that Zorro had specially prepared for Surge.

All the other dogs laughed and laughed. Surge's tail was now four times longer than his body. His ears were sticking up like a donkey's.

"Please stop this. Please, please," begged Surge, between gasps of air and steam, which were still coming from his nose.

"Only if you promise never to bully any other dog ever again and never steal anything from them," barked Rocky.

"Never chase any cats either," chimed Zorro.

"I promise, I promise," squeaked Surge. His throat was so sore, due to the mustard, he couldn't bark or growl anymore.

"You had better keep your promise, or next time things will be much worse," warned Zorro. "I will turn you into a cat and then all the dogs will chase you."

"I swear I'll keep my promise," pleaded Surge, "Now please stop this."

Zorro knew that the magic would wear off soon. He told Surge that he would reverse the spell, and bring him back to normal, but that it would take about ten minutes to work. Zorro was right. The magic wore off, and Surge turned back to his normal colour. His ears and tail returned to their usual size.

“Thank you, Rocky and Zorro. I have learnt my lesson. Just because I am bigger I should not bully others. I will never do it again. Besides I don’t have any friends.”

“You can have now, Surge. We are all going to be your friends from now on. You can join in all our games and have fun, like us.”

Surge was really grateful, but right now, all he wanted to do was go back to his caravan and sleep.

Mr Hawkins and Zorro told Rocky that they were leaving as soon as the gypsy festival was over. They would be going home via

Castlerock, and he was welcome to travel with them.

“Thank you. I might just do that.”

The last day of the festival came, and the most important event was due to take place at two pm. It was the King’s Race. The king of each gypsy clan was to choose their best horse, and race on a twenty-five mile course, around Limerick. The winner was presented with a £100 pounds and a trophy.

“Are you going to enter the race?” Rocky asked the King of their clan.

“I would, if I had a good horse.” They didn’t know the mayor was standing behind them, listening to what they said.

“You DO have a good horse,” interrupted the mayor. “One of the horses I gave you was a champion race horse! I know he is a bit too old for the big races now, but there’s a chance he may do very well here. I’ll give you a little

tip. Feed him two carrots before the race. That will make him run faster.”

“Great, Now I will enter. Thank-you.”

It was almost two pm and the Kings were getting their horses lined up at the starting post. Samson was there with a mean looking black stallion. He hadn't fed it for days, hoping he would run faster with less weight. Surge stood alongside Samson, keeping his head down and behaving himself. Samson looked down from the stallion, shouting at Surge to disrupt the other horses during the race, by barking and growling at them. He wanted to win by cheating.

Giorgio, the King from Remo's clan, pulled up his horse alongside the black stallion.

“Ha,ha,ha,” laughed Samson, “You'll be lucky if your old nag can run a mile, never mind twenty five.”

Giorgio ignored his insults, and patted his horse on the neck. He spoke quietly to him.

“You’re a great horse. You can win.” Then he fed him two special carrots.

The bell sounded the start of the race. The big black stallion took off first. Two others from behind Giorgio’s horse overtook him. One was a dapple grey, and the other a white stallion, in hot pursuit of Samson.

Giorgio’s horse was called Daisy-Pops. He had won many races when he was young, but now he was a lot older. He still loved carrots, and his owner always gave him two, before a race. Daisy-Pops knew that if he did well he would get two more at the end. He waited until he had finished eating, before he started to run. He caught up with the dapple gray and the white stallion, very quickly. There was only the big black stallion left in front.

Unknown to everyone, Rocky had tied two more carrots onto the black stallion’s tail, at the start of the race. Daisy-Pops saw the carrots, and ran at full speed to catch up. The big black stallion was a lot younger than

Daisy-Pops and could keep up a good pace, but twenty five miles was a long race even for a young horse.

Rocky took a short cut over the fields. He stopped just short of the finishing line, and waited there for the horses to pass. He had to wait half hour before he saw the big black stallion racing along, with Samson on his back, shouting,

“Come on boy. We’re going to win.” Daisy-Pops was right behind, trying to get at the carrots, which were tied to the stallion’s tail. Rocky waited until the big black stallion passed. He ran out from the hedge, and grabbed the carrots with his teeth. The two horses were tired now. They weren’t running as fast any more. Rocky knew Daisy-Pops would follow the carrots, so he ran past the black stallion with the carrots between his teeth. He was right. Daisy-Pops chased after him and past the stallion. Old Daisy-Pops was first past the winning post.

“Hurray,” shouted the crowd, “Daisy-Pops is the winner. Giorgio gets the prize money and the trophy!” Samson was furious. He jumped down off the stallion, saying all sorts of horrible things.

“You silly horse, have you only three legs?” Then he shouted at Surge, “I thought I told you to bark and growl at all the other horses, so that I could win.” Surge looked at Samson and growled, “You can do your own cheating. I have changed my ways. I’m going to be a good dog from now on, and be friends with all the other dogs. I’ll be looking for a new master, so goodbye.” Then he ran off into the crowd.

Mr Hawkins had decided to give everyone at the races some free ice cream, to cool them all down. The Kings were first in line, followed by Rocky, Remo, Sam, and the rest of the dogs.

“Are you going to have some ice cream?” Rocky asked Surge, who was standing back a little.



“After my last experience with ice cream, I don’t think I ever want to taste any ever again,” barked Surge.

Next morning the festival was over - for another year. The gypsies prepared their caravans for the journeys home, to the different parts of Ireland.

“I will miss you Rocky,” said Sam.

“I will too,” barked Surge. You have become a good friend, by showing me how to behave. Now I have lots of friends. A kind gipsy King, from another clan, has offered to have me as his dog. I am so happy now days.”

Rocky turned to Remo and King Giorgio and said,

“I will be going home with Mr Hawkins and Zorro. They are passing by Castlerock. It will only be a couple of days until I am home again. I just can’t wait to see everyone. Mind you, it’s been great fun travelling with you. I have learnt a lot about your ways. Please tell

Torn-pants and Ruff-neck that I will miss them.”

At that they all said their final goodbyes, and hoped to meet each other again in the future. Zorro tooted the horn in the van, to tell Rocky they were ready to leave. With a tear in his eye, he jumped in, and sat beside Zorro.

“Let’s go home!” Rocky barked.

It took the van two days to reach Castlerock. They had one stop over in a nice hotel, which allowed cats and dogs. Mr Hawkins drove the van into the caravan site, where Mal and Mue stayed.

“This is a beautiful place to stay. Who owns it? I might come to stay here myself sometime.”

“It belongs to Mr and Mrs O’Neill. They are very nice people. This place is called Castlerock Holiday Park, and we all love it here. There are lots of things for kids to do, like a play ground, and a games room, if it is raining.”

“Where’s your caravan Rocky?” Zorro wanted to know.

“Over there. If you stop here I’ll see if anyone is home.” Rocky jumped out of the van and ran as fast as he could. He pushed the door open. Mal and Mue were sitting with Betsy and Corky, watching television, when Rocky burst in.

“Rocky, Rocky,” they all shouted at once. “Where have you been all this time? Whatever happened to you?”

“It’s a long story. I’ll explain later. Come and meet my friends who brought me back home.”

They all went outside and greeted Mr Hawkins and Zorro.

“Come in, and have some lunch with us,” offered Mue.

They stayed for lunch, and chatted for hours around the table. Rocky told them about how he had lost his memory, and had been taken

in by a nice farmer from Donegal. He explained how he had met the gypsies, and all the people with them. There was Ruff-neck, Torn-pants, Remo, and of course the King. Mal and Mue were listening with great interest. Rocky now let them know how he had met Mr Hawkins and Zorro, at the festival, and that Mr Hawkins had brought him home again in his van.

After lunch Mr Hawkins brought some ice cream into the caravan for dessert. Mal and Mue thought it was the best ice cream they had ever tasted. Betsy and Corky were so happy to see Rocky again, that they didn't even care about ice cream.

"How are things in Castlerock, since I've been away?" Rocky wanted to know

"Not so good," answered Mal. "There is a new man on the council, called John Stuffing. Everyone calls him Stuffy-Shirt. He wants to close all the parks where the children play. They will have nowhere to go, and they will

have to do homework all afternoon, when they get home from school. He even wants to ban all dogs from the beach and the forest.

“What!” Rocky barked crossly. “Ban the forest and the beach from us! We’ll see about that.” “We think Mr Stuff-Shirt needs to be taught a lesson,” chimed in Betsy and Corky.

“Wait till all the other dogs hear about this.”

“I’m afraid they know already. They have stayed away from the beach, and the forest, since they were told about it,” answered Mue.

“What about the children? Have they been playing in the park?”

“Indeed not. They are doing extra homework each day, and have nowhere to play. It’s making them all very sad.”

“None of the children smile anymore,” added Mal.

“Sorry to interrupt,” said Zorro, while licking up the rest of the ice cream. “But I have had

an idea Rocky. I'll tell you all about it tomorrow, after breakfast."

It was almost nine o'clock. Rocky was feeling tired, after all those adventures of the last few weeks. He was glad to get to his bed.

"I have missed you all," Rocky told Betsy as he climbed in, and I have missed my own little bed too."

Rocky fell fast asleep. He eventually awakened, with the smell of sausages cooking. He ran into the kitchen, only to see that everyone else had been up for hours, and had already eaten theirs.

"Sausages! I love sausages for breakfast."  
Rocky ate six giant ones. After licking his lips in satisfaction, he asked Zorro to tell him the plan.

Zorro gathered Rocky, Betsy, and Corky together.

“This is what I want you to do at three o’clock. It’s to be a very hot day today, and everyone will want to cool down. I want you all to stand near the beach, but not go onto it.”

He and Mr Hawkins went off in the van to make some special ice cream for everyone. Later they went straight to the beach, where all the dogs were waiting. The children were there too, doing homework. Mr Stuffy- Shirt had heard that all the dogs and children were at the beach, so he arrived, to make sure no one was enjoying themselves.

“No dogs allowed here. No children allowed to play, only do lots of homework,” he shouted.

“Well,” said Zorro, “He never said anything about eating ice cream.” Zorro went over to Mr Stuffy- Shirt and offered him some. He had put extra magic sugar into his ice cream. Mr Stuffy- Shirt took the cone, and started to lick it. Suddenly he started to feel happy, so happy he started to dance. Stuffy- Shirt couldn’t stop

his feet from dancing. Then he started to sing, happy, cheery tunes.

“I feel wonderful. I have never felt so happy in my whole life. Come on everyone, let’s go onto the beach and dance.”

Zorro and Mr Hawkins laughed and laughed, as they gave all dogs and children magic ice cream. Soon all the people of Castlerock were on the beach laughing, singing and playing games.

“This is great fun,” shouted Mr Stuff- Shirt. “I am tearing down the stupid law I made. All dogs can play on the beach, and in the forest. The children can play in all the parks. There is to be no more homework for them until the end of the year,” he continued.

On the beach were the children of Haslett Primary School. They were also dancing and playing games.

Near the Rocks were **Luis McMullan**, **Matthew Kirkpatrick**, and **Clara-Rose** from



P3, playing tug of war with others from a different class. Rocky, Betsy and Corky ran down onto the sand to play with them. Rocky loved playing tug of war with the children. They allowed Rocky to catch one end of rope. Betsy and Corky grabbed the other end, to keep it fair.

“Come on, pull. Pull hard,” barked Rocky. Luis, Matthew and Clara-Rose pulled with all their might.

“We are winning. Come on, keep going,” Rocky barked.

The other children, with Betsy and Corky were trying as best they could, but Rocky’s team was just too strong. Suddenly one of the boys shouted,

“Stop pulling. Look out to sea.” They all looked around and saw a small yacht. It was in trouble. The yacht had hit some rocks and was beginning to sink.



THE YACHT HAD HIT ROCKS AND WAS SINKING

“How can we help?” shouted Luis. “It will sink in minutes, before the rescue services can get here.”

“You’re right,” agreed Matthew and Clara-Rose, “We must do something quickly.”

Rocky grabbed the rope. He hoped it would be long enough. He told Luis to hold one end tightly, and not let go. Rocky held the other end between his teeth, and swam towards the

yacht. Luckily it wasn't too far out. The two men on board had been doing some fishing, and didn't notice their yacht drifting towards the rocks. Rocky reached the sinking boat, with the rope still in his mouth. One of men grabbed the rope, and tied it to his friend, who was lying injured on deck.

"Thank you so much," said the fisherman, "I could have swum ashore, but I wouldn't leave my friend. I think he got his leg broken when the yacht hit the rocks."

"We can't leave him here. This yacht is sinking fast," barked Rocky. "Drop that broken door into the water quickly, and strap your friend on to it." The man did as Rocky suggested, and then jumped into the water himself.

"You save yourself now. The tide is beginning to go out, so swim as fast as you can."

Rocky barked to Luis and the others on the beach to pull them in.

Luis shouted to Matthew, Clara-Rose and the others,

“Pull. Pull as hard as you can.”

Soon the injured man was on the beach. The ambulance had just arrived.

“Well done children! You have saved this man’s life. If it hadn’t been for you, he would have gone down with the yacht.”

Rocky came up out of the water, and congratulated the team for doing such a wonderful job.

“You must be very strong,” he told them. “I bet you all love sausages, just like me.”

“We do,” all the children cried.

“Right, the hotdogs and the hamburgers are on.....” He was about to say “me” but he suddenly remembered he had no money. He looked around and saw Mr Stuffy-Shirt standing close by. Rocky finished his sentence by saying, “On Good old Mr Stuffy- Shirt.”

The children shouted,

“Hurrah for Mr Stuffy- Shirt. He is allowing us to play in the parks, have no homework all year, and now is buying all the burgers and hotdogs we are about to eat.”

Mr Stuffy- Shirt was still really happy. He even bought them all some coke.

“That was certainly a lot of adventures we had today,” said Rocky, when they all came back to the caravan.

“I’m glad everything worked out so well in the end”, added Betsy.

“Yes, I am really pleased too,” chimed in Corky.

“We had better get some sleep now. We never know what adventures are waiting for us in the future,” barked Rocky.

---

Time passed and one morning Betsy looked across the room at Rocky. He was merrily

chewing on the sausages he was having for breakfast. She wondered if this would be a good time to ask him something special. Betsy had been thinking about getting married to Rocky. Perhaps they could have some little pups of their own. She knew that Rocky would have to be in a good mood. She also knew he was always happy when eating his sausages. Suddenly she blurted out,

“Rocky I think we should get married. We have known each other a long time now, and I love you lots and lots.”

Rocky hardly looked up from eating his breakfast. Eventually, in between gulps, he managed to say,

“Who would want to marry us?”

“I did mean that we should marry each other, and have a family of our own. I would simply love a few little Rocky pups to look after,” Rocky finished his breakfast and thought for a while.

“Yes I think I would like a son, or daughter just like me. I agree. I think we should get married someday soon.”

“Hurray,” squealed Betsy, “I’m off the tell Mal and Mue, in fact everybody.”

As Betsy was about to run and tell her good news, they heard a strange sound outside the caravan door. It sounded like a donkey baying and a horse neighing all at the same time.

“What can that be?” asked Rocky

“I don’t know. I’ve never heard a sound like it before. We had better look out through the window, and investigate” said Betsy.

The pair peered out carefully through the curtains, waiting to hear the sound again. Suddenly they saw something sitting beside a tree, just inside the forest. It was making that weird noise. It looked like a small donkey, but it was faun coloured, with beautiful dark brown spots all over its body. The animal called again, as though it was asking for help.

“Come on Betsy. Let’s go to see what we can do.”

The pair crept slowly towards the stricken animal, not wanting to frighten it.

“Hello,” Betsy barked, “Are you alright?”

The animal lifted its head, and Betsy could see it had been crying.

“Can we help you?” asked Rocky.

“I don’t think so. In fact, I don’t think anyone can help me. I am stranded here forever. There will never be any more toys from Santa.”

Rocky thought, “This is very serious. No more toys from Santa! This poor animal stranded here forever? What’s all this about?”

They slowly came closer. Rocky and Betsy sat down beside the animal.

“First of all, tell us your name. This is Rocky, and I am Betsy. We are getting married soon.”



“Never mind all the married stuff right now, Betsy. This is serious. Tell us your name, and what your problem is. We’ll do our best to help.”

The little animal looked up again at Rocky, saying,

“My name is Rudolf, and I’m a reindeer.”

“You’re a reindeer!” Rocky and Betsy barked together.

“That’s why we didn’t recognise you. We have never seen a reindeer before. I believe they live in very cold places, like Iceland,” announced Rocky.

“Isn’t that’s where Santa lives?” asked Betsy.

“Do you know Santa, Rudolf?”

“Betsy, be quiet. Let Rudolf tell his story.” Rudolf continued.

“Just before Christmas I hurt my leg and couldn’t fly. I couldn’t lead Santa’s sleigh around the world any more. Then a Mr

Hawkins with his cat, called Zorro, came to my rescue, in a flying ice cream van. It was his magic ice cream which made their van fly.”

“Wow. That sounds cool,” barked Rocky. “We know Zorro!”

“Now you be quiet,” shouted Betsy. “It’s bad manners to interrupt. Please continue Rudolf.”

“Well, they took me in the back of their van, while Santa followed with the sleigh, full of toys. They all got delivered to the children in time for Christmas morning. I was to get a ride back in the empty sleigh, but the young reindeers were going so fast that I fell out. I floated back to earth, landing in this forest.”

“Why can’t you fly back to Iceland, when your leg is better?”

“It’s not as simple as that Rocky. I know how to find places, but we reindeers rely on the magic dust trail to find our way back to Santa land. It’s now almost New Year and the dust

trail has vanished into the air. My leg is not properly healed yet. So do you see my problem? If I can't get back to Santa land, there is no one else who knows the journey. Next year there'll be no toys for any of the children.

At that Rudolf started to cry, and make that funny sound again.

"Please don't cry Rudolf. Rocky and I will help you find a way back."

"Easier said than done," thought Rocky. "This is going to be a difficult problem to solve. I'll have to think about this one carefully."

At that Corky appeared from the forest.

"What's happening here guys?"

Rocky explained about Rudolf, and how he couldn't get back to Iceland. Mr Hawkins and Zorro had helped him to fly here, to deliver the toys, but they didn't realise he was still stuck here.

“What can we do to help?” asked Corky.

“Firstly we must find Mr Hawkins and Zorro, to see if they remember the way to Iceland. We need to ask if they are willing to help Rudolf get back home again.”

“Where **will** we start?” asked Betsy. “Mr Hawkins could be anywhere in the world selling his ice cream. It will be impossible to find him.”

“Well Betsy, we have to starting somewhere. Let’s tell all our friends about Rudolf’s problem, starting with Irish. He might have seen them. He’s so much taller than the rest of us.”

“Ok,” they all agreed. “But first we must help Rudolf get to the caravan, to rest his leg.”

Rocky and the team helped carry the reindeer to the caravan, and make him comfortable. They placed a blanket over his sore leg, to keep it warm. Mue made a lovely bowl of hot soup. Rudolph fell asleep for a while.

Meanwhile the gang ran off in the direction of the forest, to speak to Irish. After about an hour, they came to his house. He was playing in the garden, with a friend called Roxy. He was a terrier, just like Rocky.

“Hello you lot,” barked Irish, as the gang approached. “Meet my new friend, Roxy. We’re chasing each other. It’s great fun.”

“We have no time for games,” barked Rocky. “This is a very serious matter indeed.”

“My goodness, what has happened?” asked Irish anxiously.

“Have you seen Mr Hawkins or Zorro recently? We need to find them, as soon as possible.”

“I haven’t seen either of them for weeks. They must be away someplace.”

Rocky explained what the problem was. Irish agreed that it was very serious, and that Mr Hawkins must be found at once.

Roxy interrupted the conversation, telling Rocky that he had some bird-friends in the forest. They might have seen the ice cream van going past. If not, they could always ask some of their friends to look out for it. Birds had a much better view from the sky.

“Great idea,” barked Rocky. “Please ask them to help. We’ll run on now to meet other friends, and ask them if they have seen the van. Rocky, Betsy and Corky ran off, into the forest, to find their other friends. Nobody had seen Mr Hawkins or Zorro. One of them, a Dalmatian called Spotty, said that he knew where Mr Hawkins lived. It was a village called Blossom Hill, but he wasn’t too sure where that was. It was almost New Year now, and the weather was very cold. Mr Hawkins would hardly be selling ice cream in winter, so his van might be parked at the factory.

“That’s a great idea,” Rocky barked, “Thanks Spotty. We’ll find where Blossom Hill is, and go there first thing in the morning. I think we

should go back to the caravan, and see how Rudolf is getting on.”

At the caravan Rudolf was feeling a lot better. He had enjoyed his hot soup, and had had a good sleep by the fireside. Rocky explained that they were going to Blossom Hill, tomorrow, to find Mr Hawkins and Zorro.

Next morning everyone was up bright and early. Betsy looked through the caravan window.

“It’s snowing!” The others jumped across the room to look out.

“Whoopee,” barked Rocky. “We can make a snowman, and roll around in the snow.”

Corky, being a cat was not so pleased.

“Why do dogs and people like snow?” she thought, “It’s cold and wet and sticks to your fur. Brrrrrrr. I’m not going out there. I’m staying by the fire, as any sensible cat would.” Now Rudolf looked out.

“It reminds me of home,” he said sadly.

“Where I live it’s always very cold, and it snows almost all year.”

“That would be great,” barked Rocky.

“Imagine having snow all year round! Children would love that.”

Suddenly he remembered that they were all going to Blossom Hill after breakfast.

“How are going to get there?” asked Betsy.

“The snow is already too deep for us to walk or run through.”

Rocky thought for a few minutes.

“I will have my sausages first. I can’t think properly until I have had my breakfast.”

During breakfast Rocky was deep in thought. Then he announced his plan.

“The snow isn’t too deep in the forest. If I go to find Irish, he could stride through the snow with ease. It wouldn’t be difficult to make a sleigh from some old wood, stacked at the



back of the caravan. We could fasten it to Irish, and he could pull us along. We aren't very heavy, and he is a big strong dog."

"Great idea Rocky," barked Betsy. "Do you think Irish will be willing?"

"Of course he will. He wants Rudolf to find his way home, so Santa can deliver the toys next Christmas."

After a hearty breakfast, Rocky put on the extra warm coat Mue bought him for Christmas. He even put on some tiny socks to keep his paws warm. Betsy and Corky laughed at the little blue socks, but Rocky didn't care. They were keeping his paws warm, and that was the important thing.

He opened the caravan door. The wind howled, blowing snow into Corky's face.

"Shut that door!" Corky miaowed. "Its freezing out there and I'm getting covered in that awful snow. Rocky jumped out of the caravan and landed in the snow covered grass.

“See you all later.” He called, as he headed towards the forest. The trees had indeed sheltered the forest from the worst of the weather. Rocky was able to run quite fast to where Irish lived. He saw him running up the garden path, and opened the front door. Rocky ran in, and headed straight to the lovely log fire that Irish and his master had set that morning.

“What’s wrong Rocky? Why are you out in this weather?”

Rocky told him about going to find Blossom Hill village, where Mr Hawkins and Zorro lived. They would need him to pull a sleigh through the snow.

“I have the very thing, in a shed at the back of the cottage. It’s an old sleigh I used when I was a boy,” said Irish’s master. “It’s still in good order. All it needs is a bit of rope, for you to be on your way.”

“Will you help us Irish?”

“Of course I will. Besides it will be fun. I can pretend I am Rudolf, and you’re Santa on the sleigh, delivering all the toys. Let’s get it out now, and attach the rope. You sit on it, and I will pull you back to the caravan, to collect the others.”

After the sleigh was securely fastened to Irish, Rocky got onto it. He held on tightly.

“Ok Irish. Let’s go!”

Irish had very long legs. They were rushing through the forest at great speed. In no time at all they arrived back to the caravan. The others, watching out for them, came outside to greet the pair - all except Corky, of course. She stayed looking through the window, mumbling something about how mad the others were. She decided she was the only sensible one.

“Come on you two,” barked Rocky. “We’ve no time to waste.”

Betsy needed no encouragement. She couldn't wait to get onto the sleigh, but Corky simply refused to leave the warmth of the caravan.

"We will have to go without you," barked Rocky. "You'll miss all the fun."

"I don't care. I'm staying here. I'll look after Rudolf while you are away. Good luck. I hope you find Blossom Hill," miaowed Corky. "Take care!"

"Lead on Irish. Hold on tight Betsy."

Irish started running – then stopped suddenly.

"What's wrong?" inquired Betsy.

"Which way should I go? If we're to find Blossom Hill, I'd need to know what direction it's in."

"That's true," barked Rocky, "I never thought about that. Let's see now. We'll ask everybody we meet. Someone's bound to know the way."

“Good idea,” agreed Betsy. “Let’s do that. Run towards that big house, on the hill Irish. We’ll try there first.”

An old lady answered the door. Betsy asked her, very politely, if she knew where Blossom Hill was, and how they should get there?

“It’s a long way. Maybe twenty miles away or more,” the old lady told them. “Take a right turn, at the next crossroads, and go on for another 10 miles. You’ll see a farmhouse, painted pink. There’s a dog called Boxer lives there. He knows everything, and everyone in these parts. He’ll tell you how to find Blossom Hill. Good luck. I hope there isn’t too much more snow. I wouldn’t want you to get lost in any drifts around here. It can be very dangerous at this time of year.”

“I know, but we’re on a very important mission, and we must make it to Blossom Hill before nightfall. Thank you and goodbye.”

The team took off again. At the cross roads they did as the old lady had said, and turned right. The snow was getting a lot heavier now. Betsy was beginning to get very worried.

“What will we do if we get caught in a snow drift?” she asked anxiously

Rocky and Irish didn't answer. They didn't want to think about what might happen. Suddenly they heard a snapping noise. The rope had broken, and the sleigh was gliding down unaided. The road was straight downhill for a few miles. The sleigh was quickly picking up speed. It was going so fast that Irish, who was now running behind it, couldn't catch up. Betsy was terrified. She held on, with all her might, using her teeth and all four paws. Rocky was enjoying the excitement of the speed, but was gripping the sides too. The sleigh reached the bottom of the hill, and crashed into a huge snow drift, which went right over their heads. Luckily Irish was coming up behind, and saw what

had happened. He ran to the snow drift, and started digging with his strong front paws. Before long he was able to uncover Rocky and Betsy. They were very cold and frightened - not that Rocky would ever admit it!

“Now what are we going to do?” asked Betsy. “We’re stuck in snow, miles from anywhere, and it will soon be dark. You had better think up a plan quickly Rocky.”

“I am thinking. I’m thinking as fast as I can.” Rocky didn’t really know what to think. It was indeed beginning to get dark. At this time of year it was dark by five pm, and it was already four thirty.

“Look! Over there,” exclaimed Irish, who could see above the others. “There’s a faint light. It might be a house, or somewhere we can get help. You two climb on my back. I’ll carry you over there. Quickly it’s our only chance.”

Rocky and Betsy - who was now shivering, and in very bad form - climbed onto Irish's back. When they were both holding on tightly the huge dog started to stride out towards the light. In no time at all they were at the gate of a beautiful cottage. The gate was locked, but Rocky spotted a bell on the right hand pillar.

"Push the bell Irish," barked Rocky.

Irish did, and suddenly the door opened. Out came an old boxer dog whose master was waving a stick in the air.

"Whatever do you want? It's getting dark you know, and I don't answer the bell when it gets dark!" The old man went on, "Well speak up. I can't hear you. I said speak up."

They all thought, that if the man would stop talking, they would at least get a chance to speak.

Although Betsy's teeth were chattering, due to the cold, she managed to ask the old man if he would help them find some shelter for the



night. They were all very cold and had nowhere to stay.

The old man looked at his dog. It seemed to agree with their request. As it was just after Christmas, he was still feeling generous towards his fellow dogs.

“Alright, you can sleep in the shed, but for one night only. After that you have to be on your way. I can’t have just any old mongrels sleeping around here, you understand.”

Rocky was furious. He was about to bark at the old man, telling him that he wouldn’t stay in the shed anyway. He and the others were pedigrees, and far too superior to sleep in any old shed.

Betsy could tell what Rocky was about to do, so she kicked him hard on the leg, saying,

“Don’t bark anything. Just be grateful we are getting someplace to stay. After all it was your stupid idea that went wrong.”

Rocky kept quiet, and meekly followed Boxer into the shed. The old man closed the door after his dog came out, and they both went back into the warmth of the house.

“It’s really cold and dark in here,” whispered Betsy.

“Don’t worry,” answered Irish. “I’ll lie down on this old rug, and you two can snuggle in beside me. That way we will all keep warm. It won’t be long until morning.”

All three were soon fast asleep. They only woke when the Boxer came to the shed offering them some of his breakfast.

“That’s very kind of you,” said Betsy, tucking in to some of the meat and sausages that the boxer had set down.

“What are your names? Where are you going?” The Boxer asked.

“This is Irish. He is an Irish wolfhound. He’s very big, but also very nice. This is Rocky. He’s a Jackabee.”

“Excuse me Betsy! I am a pedigree Jackabee!”  
Rocky interrupted.

“Ok then,” Betsy went on, “And I’m a pedigree Beagle.”

“A Jackabee?” barked the Boxer. “I’ve heard of many things in my life, but never a Jackabee.”

“My father was a pedigree Jack Russell, and my mother was a pedigree Beagle. That makes me a pedigree Jack-a-bee.”

“I suppose you’re right. Was your dad called Jack, and your mother called Bea? Did they get married in a big castle many years ago?”

“That’s right. I remember them telling me about the Great Dane, and two stupid Alsatians at the gate,” answered Rocky.

“I knew them well. In fact I was at their wedding. What a day it was! Dogs from all

around came along. We barked and barked ‘til the small hours of the morning,” Boxer told them. “So where are you going now, in this weather?”

“We have to find Mr Hawkins, and Zorro his cat. We were told they lived in a small village called Blossom Hill. It’s very important that we find them soon. Do you know where it is?”

Boxer started his usual tricks when someone asked him a question. He looked up and down, then up again, before nodding his head and announcing that he did know where Blossom Hill was.

“It’s about two miles down that road on the left,” he told them. “You had better leave soon. The weather is to become very stormy later, but for the moment the snow has stopped.”

Irish was first to his feet.

“Come on you two. Get onto my back. Better get going, as Boxer says.”

Boxer helped the pair on to the big dog's back. Off the three headed, down the road. The snow was crisp and dry, and not too hard for Irish to walk on, or even run a little. After about an hour they spied a very snow covered sign. It read BLOSSOM HILL VILLAGE.

"This is great!" barked Rocky. "Now we must look for the ice cream factory." They passed Mr Porkpie's shop, then the garage owned by Mr What's His Name, and Mr Green's vegetable shop. When they reached the corner of Green Street, they could see the ice cream factory. Above the door, in big letters, it read, "MR HAWKINS ICE CREAM."

"Shall we knock the front door?" asked Betsy

"I think we should. It seems to be closed, and I don't see the van outside," answered Rocky.

Irish carried the pair to the door, and knocked with his huge paw. There was no answer. He tried again and again.

“Looks as if there’s no one here,” he announced. “What’ll we do now?”

Unexpectedly, the window above the front door opened, and a cat meowed.

“Hello there. What is it? We’re closed for winter. No one eats ice cream in winter you know. What do you want?”

“Can we come in please? It’s very cold outside. We need to speak to Mr Hawkins and Zorro, about something very important.”

Zorro ran down stairs and opened the door. “Oh it’s you Rocky,” he said surprised. “I’m sorry, but Mr Hawkins had to go to New York for a while. His sister isn’t very well. I don’t know when he might be back. Come in and sit by the fire and tell me what’s so important.”

Rocky started to explain how they had met Rudolf in the forest, and how he had fallen off the sleigh on his way back to Iceland. Santa, and the other reindeers, couldn’t deliver the toys to the children next year without him.

“So you understand, we need your help to get Rudolf back. He doesn’t know the way back either - even if his leg was better. The magic dust trail Rudolph follows has been dispersed by the wind,” went on Rocky.

“Indeed that would be terrible! Imagine if Santa couldn’t find his way next year. We’ll have to get Rudolf back somehow. Come on. First thing we have to do is make some special ice cream, without a certain herb in it. Follow me into the factory.”

They all went from the sitting room, through the kitchen, and into the ice cream factory. Rocky was amazed at the size of the massive ice cream maker, sitting in the middle of the room. Beside it sat a huge bowl, with all the different ingredients Mr Hawkins used, when making his magic ice cream. Zorro climbed onto the top shelf, and lifted down the secret recipe book, saying,

“We have to keep this book hidden up here, in case it’s stolen by old Mr Poke. He wants the ice cream mix for his own shop.”

Zorro explained that he would be in lots of trouble if Mr Hawkins found out that he was making ice cream while his master wasn’t there. However, this is was emergency, and surely Mr Hawkins would understand.

Zorro placed all the ingredients into the huge mixing bowl, leaving out the special herb. He switched on the power to the big machine, and it started to turn. Round and round went the bowl, until the mixture was a beautifully creamy colour. When the machine stopped, Rocky dipped his paw into it, licking the ice cream, and announcing it was simply delicious.

“You silly dog!” meowed Zorro. “You’ll be flying around the room soon. I only hope we can catch you, before you get through a window, or up the chimney.”



As Zorro finished speaking Rocky started to float into the air.

“Get me down,” he barked. Followed by, “No don’t. This is fun.” Rocky kicked his back legs and started flying all round the ice cream factory. Then he opened the door, and flew around the house. Poor Rocky didn’t know Zorro had left the window above the front door open, when he had been speaking to them. He flew straight through, and the wind carried him all over Blossom Hill village. The people couldn’t believe their eyes. They could see a dog floating above their heads.

“It’s the funniest thing ever,” said one man. Another thought it was a joke of some kind. As Rocky hadn’t taken too much of the ice cream, it wore off quickly. He landed, with a huge splash, in the middle of the town’s duck pond. The ducks weren’t too pleased at being disturbed so early, and quacked loudly, telling Rocky to get out of their pond and go home. Rocky was happy to obey, as the water was

freezing. He jumped out and gave himself a good shake. He arrived back at the ice cream factory in a hurry.

Zorro asked him if he had enjoyed his little trip, and warned him not to taste anything again without asking first.

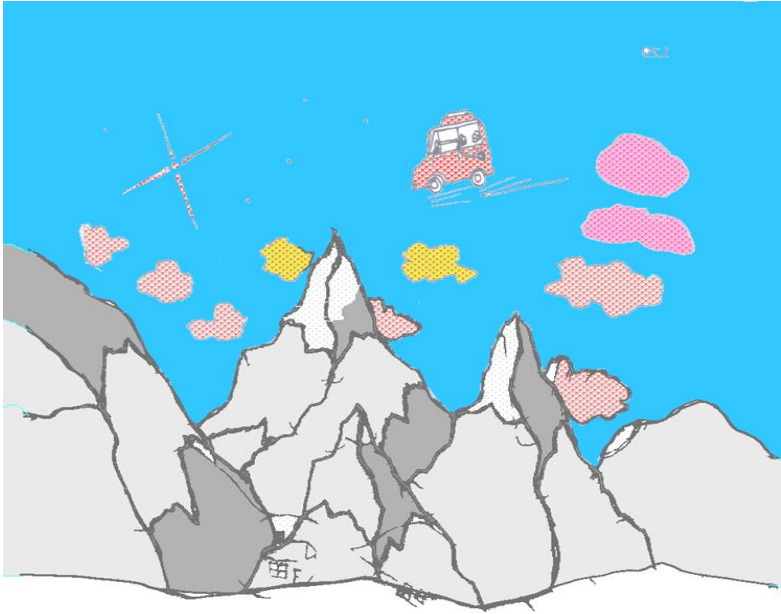
“I have it ready now,” Zorro announced. “Let’s get the van up to the door, and fill it with ice cream.”

They all helped carry the large tubs of ice cream into the van. One went into the tank, while the other three were put into the back of the van, for refuelling on the journey.

“There’s no more time to waste. Everyone get into the van. I’ll drive, or rather, I’ll steer when the van starts to fly.”

With great excitement they piled into the back of the van. Rocky sat in front with Zorro, to show him the way to the caravan, to collect Rudolf. As soon as Zorro released the brakes, the van rolled down the steep hill, outside the

factory. He started the engine and the van roared into life. First it lifted a little, but then came back down again.



“I’ll have to go a bit faster,” said Zorro, as he pushed the accelerator down with his paw as far as it would go. That did it! The van roared into the air. The people of Blossom Hill Village

didn't know what to think - first a flying dog, then a flying van.

The van turned right over the church, and headed above the mountains. Rocky told Zorro to follow the beach, and land at Castlerock Caravan Park, where Rudolf was waiting.

The van arrived in ten minutes. Zorro, now a very accomplished driver, landed beside the caravan. Rocky jumped out, telling Rudolf to join them if he wanted to get back to Iceland soon. He explained to Mal and Mue that he was on a very important mission, and might not be back for some time.

“Good luck to you all. Have a safe journey, wherever you're going,” shouted Mal and Mue, as the van lifted into the air again. The people of Castlerock gasped in amazement as the van shot into the sky and disappeared above the clouds.

“Whoopee,” barked Rocky. “This is super.”  
Faster and faster they went.

“Look out everyone. Hold tight. I have to make a sharp turn, towards that bright northern star,” announced Zorro.

Zorro turned the steering wheel and the van headed towards the star. After several hours the indicator showed that their fuel level was low. Zorro asked Rocky to take over the driving, as he had to go back to refill the tank with more ice cream. With the job done, Zorro came back up front. Rocky was about to move from the driving seat when Zorro said he was feeling a little tired, and needed to sleep for a while. He asked Rocky to continue driving until they came across ice covered mountains. Rocky was to waken him immediately at that point. The next five hundred miles passed very quickly, as the van roared towards the north.

Betsy had moved into the front seat beside Rocky, while Zorro slept. Suddenly she barked,

“Look Rocky. I can see ice covered mountains below. We must be almost there. I’ll waken Zorro so that he can land the van.”

Betsy shook Zorro awake. He wasn’t too pleased at first, because he was having a nice dream, chasing mice around the ice cream factory. Quickly he realised that he was needed at the wheel, to steer the van down safely. He took over the driving, and was able to spot the exact mountain where Santa had his toy factory. He landed close by, and some of the elves came out to greet him.

“Hi Zorro, who have you here?” asked the head elf.

Zorro introduced Rocky, Betsy, and Irish. He explained to the elves how they had met Rudolf in the forest, and had taken care of

him.



**RUDOLF STEPPED OUT OF THE VAN**

“It was very kind of you three to look after Rudolf. Zorro, it was also great that you were able bring him back to us. We were all so

worried about him. Next Christmas we would not have been able to find our way around the world without Rudolf to guide us.” They now all went down into Santa’s grotto, where they were given a tasty bowl of hot soup to warm them up again.

Rocky and Betsy watched as the elves worked carefully, making next year’s toys for all the boys and girls. Rocky asked if he and Betsy could help them. The elves were delighted to have two extra workers. They showed Rocky and Betsy how to make soft cuddly toy dogs for the children.

Next morning Zorro announce he had to go home. Mr Hawkins would be back from his sister’s house soon, and he would need the van for deliveries. He asked the others if they were returning with him.

Rocky looked towards Betsy. They both agreed, at the same time, to stay until next Christmas, helping to make the toys. Irish decided to go home with Zorro.



Santa happened to arrive at that very moment. He heard Rocky and Betsy say that they were going to stay to help the elves.

“You have been so good,” Santa said. “I think I will give you both an extra present this year.”

Santa looked at Betsy.

“Well my dear, what would you like most in the whole world?” Betsy didn’t need time to think about her answer.

“I want to marry Rocky!” she blurted.

“Now you Rocky, what do you want?”

“Well, I want to marry Betsy, and have lots of little Rocky’s.”

“You shall have your wish,” announced Santa. “I have power to marry you both. The wedding can be here and now, in Iceland.”

Santa asked them to hold paws together, and they were married there and then. All the

elves clapped and cheered. They arranged the biggest party Iceland had ever seen.

Rocky and Betsy never did come back from Iceland. They were always very happy making toys for all the children. Zorro did make another trip to Iceland and was able to tell us that there were now two more little Jackabees happily playing in the snow.

So if Santa ever leaves you a cuddly dog toy, who knows, it may have been made by Rocky or Betsy!



ROCKY AND BETSY  
WERE MARRIED

The End .

Written by Malcolm Abbott

Edited by Muriel Abbott

This book is dedicated to my  
wonderful Grandchildren

Bobby and JulieAnn

We hope you enjoyed this book. Other books by Malcolm Abbott can be found on Amazon, Kindle and most other sites.

The Adventures of a Jackabee was the first book Malcolm wrote. Next was The Magic Ice-Cream, followed by, Sammy the Sea Sick Seal, which is in full colour, and written for very young children.



*Malcolm Abbott.*



