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LILLY

TO THE rescue

LOST
LITTLE LEOPARD

Illustrations by

JAMES BERNARDIN

STARSCAPE



A TOM DOHERTY ASSOCIATES BOOK

NEW YORK

This is a work of fiction. All of the characters, organizations,
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LILY TO THE RESCUE: LOST LITTLE LEOPARD

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A Starscape Book
Published by Tom Doherty Associates
120 Broadway
New York, NY 10271

www.tor-forge.com

The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
is available upon request.

ISBN 978-1-250-76256-6 (trade paperback)

ISBN 978-1-250-76259-7 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-1-250-76260-3 (ebook)

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First Edition: February 2021

Printed in the United States of America

0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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I was playing in the backyard with my girl, Maggie Rose, and my good friend Brewster.

Well, Maggie Rose and I were playing. Brewster was watching. Watching is something Brewster does a lot.

Napping is something he does even more.

Maggie Rose is my girl, and I am her dog. We were playing my favorite game in the entire world, which is Give-Lily-a-Treat. But Maggie Rose kept getting it wrong.

“Play dead, Lily,” she told me. “Play dead!”

She had that treat clutched tight in her fist. I knew it was in there! Her whole hand smelled like chicken, and chicken is the best treat. No, maybe salmon. No, bacon . . . or peanut butter. . . . These are the sorts of things I think about a lot, but I never can make up my mind.

Probably the best treat of all is whichever one I’m about to eat, so I nibbled and licked at Maggie Rose’s fingers, trying to get to that chicken-smelling thing she was clutching so tightly.

Brewster lay next to us in the grass. Brewster is a lot older than I am, and a lot lazier. He and I often go to a place called Work, where I visit animals and he sleeps. Then we go Home, where I play with Maggie Rose and he sleeps. He was interested in the treat, too, but not interested enough to get up and do anything about it.

That's how he is. I don't understand it, but there are lots of things I don't understand—like why Maggie Rose wasn't giving me the treat! I licked her hand even harder, trying to get my tongue between her fingers.



“No, Lily!” Maggie Rose told me.

Humans like that word: “No.” I do not.

Maggie pushed me away a little. “Play dead, Lily!” she told me.

I stared at her. She had that tone in her voice that she uses when she wants me to do a trick, like Sit or Down or Shake. But she wasn’t saying any of those words.

Still, when I do Sit or Down or Shake I get a treat sometimes. So I tried. I put my rump on the grass and looked eagerly at Maggie Rose.

She didn’t give me the treat. So I flopped down to put my belly in the grass. Treat now, right?

Maggie Rose did not seem to notice how well I was doing Down. So I jumped up to give her my paw. Everybody likes it when I do Shake. Maggie Rose couldn’t possibly resist and would give me chicken!

Except she didn’t.

Brewster let out a long sigh and rolled over so that he could rub his back in the soft grass. He wiggled a little and groaned as the warm sun touched his belly. He closed his eyes.

“Good dog, Brewster!” Maggie Rose exclaimed. “Good job playing dead!”



Then she gave Brewster my treat.

I stared at her in dismay. Brewster got a treat for, what, taking a nap? Brewster takes

naps all the time, whether anybody tells him to or not! It isn't a trick!

I don't think Brewster knew why he was getting chicken any more than I did, but he ate it. I jumped into Maggie Rose's lap and licked both her hands to get all the chicken taste I could. Since she was my girl, I accepted that she gave my treat to Brewster.

Good dogs have to put up with a lot of unfair things.

While I was working on Maggie Rose's hands, Mom came out into the backyard. I like Mom very much and normally I would run over to sniff at her shoes and see if she smelled like any new animals. Mom goes to Work every day and there are lots of animals at Work.

But I was too busy getting the last traces of chicken off Maggie Rose's thumb, so I only wagged my tail in Mom's direction.

“Maggie Rose,” Mom said. “Your dad just called. He’s working up in the mountains today, and he needs Lily.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. He just said to bring you both, a bottle of kitten formula, and he’d explain when we got there.”

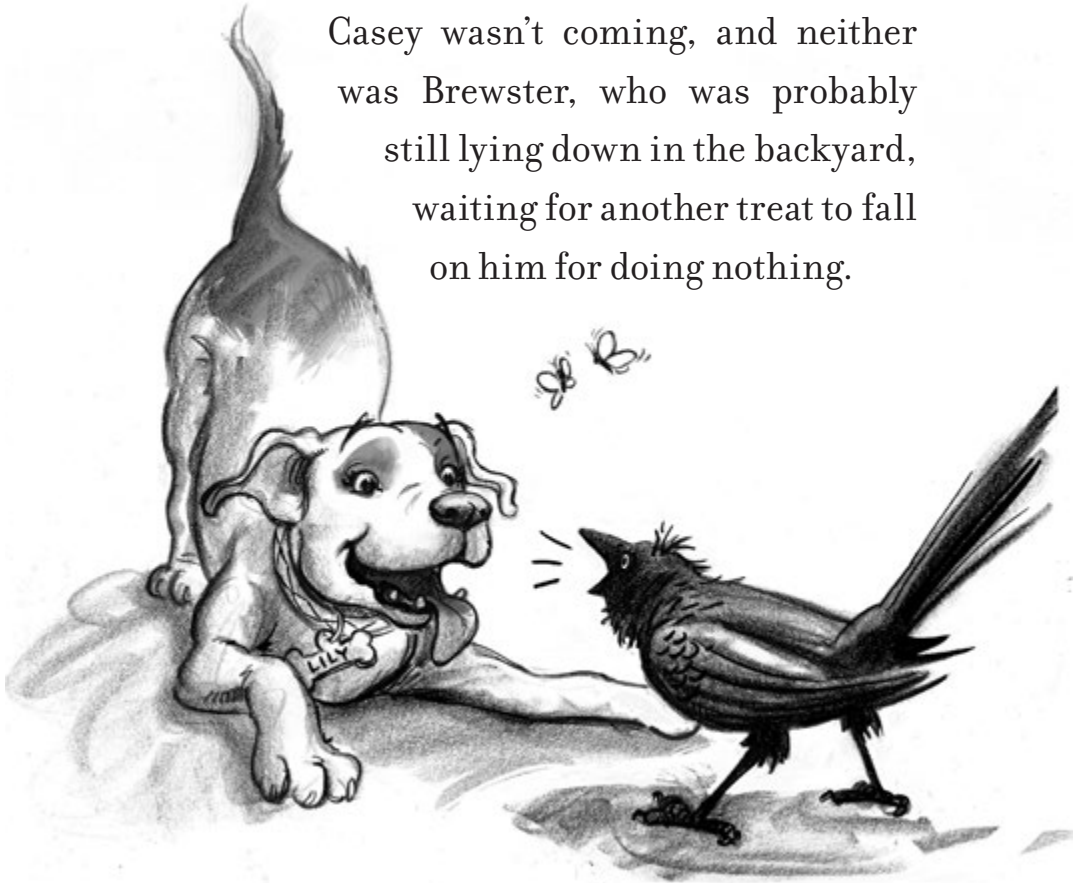
Then Maggie Rose and Mom did the thing that people do sometimes, where they hurry around saying stuff like “Where’s my phone?” and “Maggie Rose, tie your shoes, please!” I helped by following Maggie Rose closely so that she’d know I was always there if she needed anything. I am so good at this that she even tripped over me a few times.

When we got to the car, Casey fluttered down and landed on the ground. Casey is both my friend and a crow. He croaked up at me. “Ree-ree,” he said. He says this a lot when I am around. It sounds a little like *Lily*.

“Can we bring Casey, Mom?” my girl asked.

“Better not. We don’t know what your dad is doing, and I wouldn’t want Casey to get in the way.”

Sometimes Mom lifts the back of the car and Casey flies right in, into one of the cages back there. But not this time. Casey wasn’t coming, and neither was Brewster, who was probably still lying down in the backyard, waiting for another treat to fall on him for doing nothing.



When I climbed into the back seat with Maggie Rose I sniffed to confirm she still had chicken. She did! I could tell she had treats making a delicious bulge in her pocket.

As we drove, I put my nose out of the window and sniffed as hard as I could. That's what I love best about car rides—all the smells that come gushing in the window, so many that they make me sneeze. Maggie Rose likes to wipe her face after I sneeze.

Soon the air coming at me was cleaner and colder.

I turned away from the window so I could sneeze on her cheek.

“Lily!” Maggie Rose sputtered.

I wagged.

The car stopped and Maggie Rose let me out. I squatted and made a puddle in the worn-out grass, then looked around, excited to be here even though I didn't know where I was or what we were doing.

I saw some big buildings, bigger than the house where I lived with Maggie Rose. Next to the buildings were big patches of lawn that had been fenced in. I hoped I'd get to go into one of those yards soon, and be off my leash and maybe find another dog to wrestle with.

“James!” Mom waved at Dad, who had just come out of a building. “We’re here!”

He walked over to us, and I tugged on the leash to drag Maggie Rose closer so I could smell his shoes. He has the best shoes, even better than Mom’s, with thick soles packed full of marvelous odors.

Dad gave Mom and my girl a hug and reached down to pet me. “You want to see something special?” he asked my girl.

Then I heard a scream.