

What Happened to My Cat

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Chapter 1

“Here, Josie, here Josie!” called out Ketasha, shaking a can of Josie's favorite Kitty treats. Josie usually came running whenever she heard the rattle of the treats, but not this time. Ketasha knew that Josie liked to sleep under the barn, so she walked in that direction.

“Treats, Josie, treats!” Ketasha called out even louder. Maybe, just maybe, that old cat finally figured out that treats meant it was time to come in for the night. Josie didn't seem to like coming in for the night but Ketasha was afraid of coyotes at night. Finally Josie came running from behind the barn.

“There you are! Here's your treat!” Ketasha bent down and held out a treat. Josie sniffed at it and only ate it when Ketasha practically put it in her mouth. Then Ketasha scooped up the cat and carried it inside. “Oh, you're heavy,” Ketasha said to the cat. “What have you been eating – mice?”

Ketasha carried Josie into the house through the kitchen door and dropped the cat on the floor. Usually Josie was squirming so much that Ketasha couldn't keep ahold of the cat and it jumped out of her arms as soon as the door closed. Usually, the cat then promptly pointed her bottom at Ketasha, lifted her tail straight in the air and sauntered off to the basement, never to be seen again until the next morning. Not today. Today Josie crouched down for a moment, then stood up and looked around. She circled around Ketasha's legs and then went and circled around Mom's legs and then finally walked slowly over to the basement stairs, where she stopped and sniffed the air. She looked back at Ketasha and Mom.

“That was weird,” said Ketasha. She looked at the cat.

“Why do you say that?” asked Mom, who was busy with cooking something.

“Josie is acting, I don't know, weird.” Ketasha said.

Mom looked over at Josie. “Yes, you know she does seem a bit strange,” began Mom. The cat stared right back in Mom's eyes. Mom stopped in mid-sentence and stared into the cat's twinkling eyes. “Oh no, there's nothing wrong with that cat. Nothing to bother about.” Mom went back to her cooking.

The cat turned its twinkling eyes at Ketasha, which just made Ketasha think all the more that something was strange. After a moment the cat went down the basement stairs. Ketasha walked over to the basement stairs and looked down into the dark basement. She could not see the cat. “Now that was weird,” said Ketasha.

“Who's weird,” demanded Lex as he came bouncing into the kitchen, brandishing a pretend light saber. “You?”

Ketasha just stuck her tongue out at her brother and shook her head.

“Who's weird, Mom?” repeated Lex, slicing off the head of yet another droid.

“Nobody,” said Mom. “Why are you so worried about the cat, sweetie?” Mom looked at Ketasha.

“I think Josie's been eating mice. She didn't want her treat and she's fat,” said Ketasha.

“Cool,” said Lex, taking several vicious swipes at another imagined foe or three. “Josie eats mice.”

“Mom!” Ketasha protested.

“Enough of that, both of you. You both have homework to do. Now let's get to it.” Mom dried off her hands and led them both into the dining room, where homework got done. Nobody said another word about the cat.

Chapter 2

The next morning, when Lex opened the basement door, there was Josie as always, waiting to get out. Just like always, the cat immediately ran over to the back door and scratched at it until somebody opened the door for her. Zoom, off she went toward the barn as soon as Lex opened the door. “Yeah, go kill some more mice, Josie!”

“Let's go, rise and shine!” said Daddy, in his usual too-early-in-the-morning-to-be-so-cheerful way. This always drove Ketasha nutty. “First call for beautiful girls to smile!”

“Ugh,” said Ketasha. “Do I have to?” She buried herself even deeper under her covers. She did not sleep well at all that night. There were just too many dogs barking.

“Ayup, risey and shiney, don't want to be behiney,” sang Daddy. “You've got five minutes to get out of that bed and get dressed.”

“But Dad, didn't you hear all that barking last night,” said Ketasha. “It sounded like Lucy and Toto were out all night.” Ketasha figured he didn't hear, because everybody knew Dad could sleep through anything.

“Actually, I did,” he said. “Those people down there just don't get it. But enough of that, time to get dressed.” Dad went away to go shave.

Ketasha got slowly out of bed and looked out her bedroom window toward the fenced in yard where Lucy and Toto lived, two houses down the street. The two dogs were still out in the yard, but they were just sitting there, staring at the line of bushes on the Sooner's side of the fence. No, wait, they were staring at Josie, who was sitting between two of the bushes. Now that was very weird.

Daddy started counting out loud, which meant he was going to skip making her breakfast. Ketasha forgot all about Josie the cat for the rest of the day. It wasn't until Josie didn't come running for the treats that evening that she

remembered what she saw. No matter what she said to Mom, Mom just didn't think there was anything funny going on with Josie. Dad, on the other hand, did think the cat was acting strangely.

“Eating mice? That old cat? Instead of treats and a warm bed?” Dad said. “That doesn't sound right.” He didn't think too much more about it.

That night Ketasha worried all night about Josie being outside, but she didn't hear any barking dogs. She saw Buster, the Sooner's dog, come out for his last run before bed but that wasn't unusual. What was a little strange was that Buster paid no attention to Lucy and Toto, even though those two dogs were also outside.

Chapter 3

“Hey,” said Lex, when he went downstairs as he always did before anyone else got up and opened the basement door to let Josie out, “where's Josie?” He heard scratching and meowing at the back door, so he went and opened it. Sure enough, Josie came walking in and went downstairs to eat. “That's weird,” he said.

“Josie's weird,” he said again when Ketasha and everybody else sat down for breakfast. “She was out all night.”

“I know,” said Ketasha. “Is she OK?” Ketasha just imagined her ear was torn off or something, not just tattered like it already was.

“I dunno,” said Lex. “She didn't have any mice.” He was disappointed about that.

“That's weird” said Dad out loud. He was looking out the big picture window and into the back yard.

“What's that, dear,” said Mom.

“Yeah, what, Dad, what?” said Ketasha anxiously.

Dad stood up and went out onto the back porch. Ketasha and Lex followed him. He was staring into the group of evergreens in the back corner of the yard. Now Ketasha could see there was some kind of dog lying down under the trees.

“Stay back,” said Dad as he went down the steps and across the yard toward the dog. It wasn't moving. He got about half way there and came back quickly.

“Stay away from there,” he said, “and I mean it. That animal is dead.” He went back inside the house and called the police.

Both Ketasha and Lex could hardly stand it. There was a dead dog out there and they couldn't go see. They had to wait for the police. The police took forever to get there. When they did, Dad showed them the body in the trees. The police got a net and carefully went right up to whatever it was.

Mike, Katrina and Timmy from next door came out to see what was going on. Their dog Buster came out too but they kept him on his chain. Mr. and Mrs. Sooner came over to talk to Mom and Dad while the police examined the body.

“What's going on!” the Sooner kids asked, “why are the police here.”

“There's a dead animal over there,” answered Lex. “Maybe it's a dog.”

“Good thing it's not Buster,” said Timmy. “He was out last night.”

“Our cat was out last night too,” said Ketasha. “Josie has been acting weird lately.”

“Yeah, Buster too,” said Mike, the oldest of the three Sooner kids. He was already in sixth grade. “Now he doesn't want to play fetch any more.”

“And Mom says he doesn't eat right,” added Katrina, “because he doesn't poop when she walks him”

Timmy and Lex, the two youngest boys, laughed at that. They went off to go see if Buster pooped yet today.

The police finally brought a tarp over and wrapped up the animal and

carried it away. An officer came over to talk to everybody.

“What's happened,” asked Dad.

“That was a coyote,” said Officer Harrison. “The strange thing is we think it was somehow electrocuted. You don't have any loose or bare wiring going into this barn, do you?”

“No not at all,” said Dad.

“Well, have you seen any deer around here lately?” asked Officer Harrison.

“Coyotes follow deer,” said Mike. The kids were all standing far away from the dead coyote.

“I knew that,” said Ketasha.

Nobody could remember seeing any deer. Nobody could remember ever seeing any coyotes in their neighborhood either.

“Well, if you do see any deer or any more coyotes, please call the station. We don't like these kinds of mysteries. Thank you and have a good day.” Officer Harrison left, along with all the rest of the police.

“Whoa,” said Lex, “an electrical coyote.”

“Cool,” said Timmy. “let's play.” The two boys wandered off again, and Mike went with them just to keep an eye on them. There was no telling what other dead animals might be around.

“Is Buster really being weird,” said Ketasha to Katrina. All the parents went back in their houses too.

“Yes,” said Katrina. “He just wants to sleep all day and go out all night. He kept me awake all night the other night.”

“Me too!” said Ketasha. “I mean, I was awake all night because of barking dogs.”

“That was Lucy and Toto,” said Katrina. “I thought they were never going to be quiet and they drove Buster crazy.”

“Josie is acting weird too,” said Ketasha. “All the animals are acting weird. Hey, want to come over and play for awhile? I have some new songs on my iPod.”

“Sure,” said Katrina. The two girls ran off to Ketasha's room.

Chapter 4

That evening, Ketasha expected Josie would not come inside when she called so Ketasha really didn't call as loudly or rattle the treats as much. Instead, Josie came running right away and wasn't even interested in the treats. She wouldn't let Ketasha pick her up, either. She just ran inside when Ketasha opened the door. Ketasha noticed that some of the hair on Josie's back looked out of place and scraggly.

“Buster! Buster, stop!” It was Katrina, shouting at the Sooner's labrador retriever. Ketasha ran back out to see. Katrina was just bringing Buster back from a walk and the dog was refusing to go inside. He was pulling Katrina away from the back door of their house. “Buster! Mommy!” shouted Katrina.

Mike came running out to help. He grabbed the leash from Katrina but Buster was still pulling away. The dog weighed as much as Katrina and more than half as much as Mike. “Stop it Buster, now!”

That's when Mr. Sooner came out and put an end to it. He tied Buster up to a very short leash connected to the shed and scolded the dog. Buster just laid down and made no noise. Ketasha got the feeling this was just what Buster wanted.

“What's going on over there,” asked Mom when Ketasha went inside.

“Buster is being bad. Mr. Sooner has to tie him up,” answered Ketasha. Buster was the sweetest dog that Ketasha knew. Except maybe for Tony the little Irish Terrier that lived around the corner.

“Oh well I'm sure Buster is fine,” said Mom. “You brought Josie inside, right?”

“Yes, Mom.” None of this made Ketasha feel good.

Chapter 5

The next day was Sunday. Dad took Lex and Ketasha to church. Just like many Sundays, the children all went downstairs for children's liturgy. When Mrs. Lawton asked if anyone had anything to pray for, Ketasha immediately shot her hand up and Mrs. Lawton called on her.

“I want to pray for my cat Josie, who is not being like herself at all,” said Ketasha. Instantly, six more arms went up in the air, including Katrina's. Lots of kids had dogs or cats that were acting funny, and all these kids were worried.

“I think somebody took Buster and just gave us another dog that looks like Buster,” said Mike Sooner. This idea sent chills through all of the children. The adults said no, that couldn't be, you could tell the difference if it was another dog or cat that just looked the same, not to worry. Ketasha thought this sounded just like Mom and she thought that Mike might just be right, even if he was a boy.

But if somebody took Josie, where was Josie? And where would they find another old cat who had one tattered ear like Josie? No, thought Ketasha, it is Josie but maybe somebody just gave her something that makes her act odd.

“Maybe it's a clone, “shouted one of the other boys, “or a robot!” This made the adults just laugh but none of the kids did.

Chapter 6

That Sunday happened to be Hospitality Sunday so Dad brought Lex and Ketasha over for some donuts and juice. The Sooner kids didn't go to hospitality,

but Liza did and so did Jonah. Ketasha went over to talk to them. They had a cat too.

“Is your kitty OK?” she asked Liza.

“No,” said Liza right away. “She doesn't sleep at the same time, she doesn't eat the same way and she runs away whenever she can. She was out all night the other night.” Liza went on talking for another two or three minutes.

Finally Ketasha got to say “Well what can we do?”

“Use the Force and find the bad guys,” interrupted Jonah. Lex thought this was a great idea.

Ketasha just rolled her eyes at the two boys but it gave her an idea.

“Come on Liza.”

Liza followed Ketasha over to where her Dad was sitting. She explained that she wanted to talk to Father Mganai but she wanted Dad to go too. “What about?” Dad asked.

“Father Mganai is from Africa and maybe he knows more about animals,” Ketasha said. This sounded like a great idea to Liza, who nodded her head in agreement. She had studied Africa in school.

Dad agreed and took the two girls over to the father. The boys were too shy to come all the way over but they found a way to come closer.

“Father, my daughter Ketasha here and her friend Liza would like your advice about something that bothers them very much,” said Dad. “Can you help?”

“Absolutely,” said Father Mganai in his deep voice with that accent of his. “Let me guess, you are worried about your pets.”

The girls were both amazed. Of course, this was a priest and they were supposed to know everything. “Yes,” said Ketasha. “I am very worried about my cat. I want to know what happened to her or where she goes at night when she won't come in.”

“I am not a shaman like that,” said the Father. “I do not have magical powers. But in my village, it was the teenage boys who were the very best at following someone without being seen. Next time I am at the Teen service I will ask if any can help.”

Dad said thank you and made sure the girls did too. Liza was busy for the rest of the day and so was Jonah so Ketasha and Lex and Dad just went home.

Chapter 7

Now Ketasha was determined to find out what was wrong with Josie. She went over to the Sooner's house and talked to Mike and Katrina. She told them about how she saw Lucy and Toto just sitting there looking at Josie, who was just sitting there and not running away. Ketasha wanted to know what would happen if they put Buister in the barn with Josie and closed the door. Normally, Josie stayed as far away as she could from Buster, and normally, Buster chased after Josie because he wanted to play. Mike and Katrina agreed that this was a good idea so they went and got Buster. Ketasha went home and found Josie laying down in her bed. Ketasha caught her before she knew what was happening.

The kids put the two animals in the barn and closed the doors. Then they ran around back and looked in the window.

Sure enough, Josie did not run away from Buster, and Buster did not chase Josie. Instead they both sat like they were talking to each other and then they started searching everywhere in the barn looking for a way to get out.

“Cats don't talk to dogs,” said Katrina.

“Dogs don't talk to cats,” said Ketasha.

“I think they're robots,” said Mike. “That's why they act so strange all the time.”

Ketasha started crying. The two creatures in the barn heard this and

stopped looking around. “What happened to my cat,” cried Ketasha. “I hope she's not dead.”

“Come on, we have to tell our Mom and Dads,” said Katrina.

“No, they don't believe us,” replied Ketasha angrily.

“She's right, we have to prove it some way,” said Mike. “I guess we can let them out now. Too bad we can't find the switch to turn them off. That would really prove it.”

“Well, what are we waiting for,” said Ketasha. “Let's go do it now.” The three children went carefully back into the barn, being careful not to let Buster or Josie get out. They tied Buster to a leash and after some scampering captured the cat. Very carefully Ketasha felt all over Josie, looking for a switch. She couldn't find anything except skin and fur and claws and bones and a collar. Ketasha ran her fingers under the collar and there it was.

“I found it,” she nearly shouted. The cat started to do anything it could to get free. Katrina and Mike held the cat down.

“Push it,” said Mike, “push it! Hurry up!”

“But what if it won't turn back on,” asked Ketasha, scared now.

“Who cares! Do it!” said Katrina. So Ketasha pushed the switch and instantly Josie stopped moving and became very stiff. The kids took their hands away and stepped back. Buster started barking up a storm so much that Mike had to take him back home and tie him up to his run line. Then Mike came back in the barn.

“Now what do we do,” asked Ketasha. “Buster is a robot and Toto is a robot and Lucy is a robot and Sam, Liza's cat, is a robot.” Seeing Josie the robot looking like it was dead reminded Ketasha that she didn't know what happened to the real Josie. She almost started crying again. Katrina did start crying.

“Didn't you say that Father Mganai said that he was going to find us some trackers?” said Mike. “That's what we need now – some trackers. We can turn

Josie back on and see where she goes. Or we could let Buster loose and see where he goes.”

“Mom and Dad would punish us if we let Buster loose,” said Katrina. “We can't do that.”

“I guess we have to wait, then,” said Ketasha. “What happened to my cat,” she whimpered, 'what happened to my cat.’”

Chapter 8

“Buster!” shouted Mrs. Sooner. “Buster come back here!” Ketasha, Katrina and Mike ran out of the barn to see what was going on. They got out in time to see Buster running away up the street.

“I'll get him Mom,” shouted Timmy, who had been riding bikes with Lex the whole time the other kids were in the barn. Timmy took off after Buster. Lex followed right behind.

“No, Timmy, wait!” shouted Mrs. Sooner but it didn't matter. The two boys were gone around the corner after the dog.

Lex and Timmy pedaled as fast as they could possibly go. Buster was running right along the side of the road. He turned this way and that way and the boys followed. Then he ducked away into a yard behind one of the houses. Timmy slowed down, looking around. Lex kept going as fast as he could.

“There he is,” he shouted, “come on!” Buster reappeared and headed up a street that ended in a dirt road. Lex and Timmy pedaled as fast as they could go.

When they got to the dirt road, they saw Buster running into the woods on the other side. Lex jumped off his bike and ran after Buster. Timmy started to run but then stopped when he saw that Buster was already out of sight. Pretty soon Lex gave up too and came back to the bikes.

Both boys were tired now and they knew they couldn't follow Buster any

more.

“Uh oh,” said Lex, “how do we get back?”

“Don't worry,” said Timmy, “my Dad has taken us cycling over here before. I know the way.” So Timmy led the way back toward home. While they were pedaling home, they noticed that two of the motorized kite-airplanes that sometimes flew over the neighborhood were up in the sky. It almost looked like they were following the boys home.

“Where have you been!” said everybody when they got back. “Don't ever do that again!” said the Moms and Dads. Mr. Sooner called somebody on his cell phone and said thanks, the boys are home safe. Then he waved up in the sky at the two motorized kite-airplanes, which turned and flew away.

Finally Mrs. Sooner asked if they saw where Buster went and the boys told them he went into the woods over by the dirt road.

The Sooners got in their car and drove off to go look.

Chapter 9

The two teenagers who rang the Alders' doorbell about an hour later thought this was a very good clue when they heard it. They looked at each other and nodded.

“So what does that tell you,” asked Dad, seeing these knowing looks.

“There are two good places for a base in that direction – the fields over on Rockland avenue,” started Samantha..

“And the old scout camp near there,” replied Jonathan. It was Jonathan who had explained, when Ketasha opened the door, wondering why these two teenagers had come to her house, that Father Mganai had sent them to help. Jonathan was an Eagle scout and so was Samantha. Jonathan had also been hunting with his grandfather in Maine since he was a little boy and Samantha was

studying to be an animal doctor.

“I think we are going to start with Rockland avenue,” said Jonathan. “The water pumping station over there has good places to hide a car or a truck.”

“Sounds great,” said Dad. “You have our number if you need anything.”

The two teenagers went down the front steps and out to Samantha's jeep. Ketasha saw that Dad was already returning to his easy chair so she took the opportunity to run after the two scouts.

“Are you good at following animals too?” asked Ketasha. “It's really important.”

“Yes, of course,” laughed Jonathan. “That's what we do best.”

“Well, I have my cat in the barn. She has been staying out all night the last couple of nights and I think she goes where Buster went.” Ketasha really hoped these two would take her seriously.

“Well, that is interesting,” said Samantha. She turned to Jonathan. “Maybe we should take the cat with us and let it go over on Silver Hill Road to see where it goes.”

“No,” objected Ketasha quickly. “You can't do that.”

“Why not,” asked Jonathan. “We will be careful with her.”

Ketasha became very agitated and nervous. She didn't want to tell these two that Josie was a robot or they might go to the police. “She will just get confused and run away from you wherever she can.”

“Hmm,” said Jonathan. “Good point. How about if we don't find Buster that we come back after dinner and follow Josie. You can let her out then.”

Ketasha was starting to have doubts about this. “Oh I don't know. Maybe. OK.” Now she didn't know what she wanted.

“Wait, isn't this the place where the coyote got electrocuted?” asked Sam.

“Yes, over there by the trees,” pointed Ketasha.

Sam got out of the jeep and went to the place, followed by Jonathan and

Ketasha. Lex saw them and came out too.

Sam looked very closely at the ground while Jonathan examined the trees and the bushes. “This coyote had something in its mouth when it died,” said Sam. “And whatever it is electrocuted it and then somehow got away.”

“Something that can move and carries a charge,” said Jonathan. “I only know of one thing like that which isn't swimming in the ocean.”

“What, what!” said Ketasha. She could not imagine what that could be.

“A human,” answered Sam.

“Electro is REAL?” said Lex, both excited and scared at the same time. He thought Electro only existed in Spiderman comic books.

Jonathan and Sam were quick to answer that. No no, they explained, the human most likely had some kind of stunner or prod. Lex liked that idea a lot more.

“A coyote would never approach a human and would run away if someone chased after it,” said Sam. “This just doesn't make sense.”

Chapter 10

“What if it was an electric cat?” said Ketasha in a very quiet voice. She was starting to think Josie the robot killed the coyote. Now she didn't want to turn it back on. Maybe she should just give it to the teenagers.

“What, like some kind of robot?” asked Jonathan. He looked kind of funny at Ketasha. It was clear he didn't think such a robot could exist.

That made Ketasha mad. “I'll show you.” She ran off into the barn. Lex followed her, too curious to stay put.

In just a minute, she returned with the deactivated cat robot. Both Jonathan and Samantha could not believe what they were seeing. “Well, I guess you are right,” admitted Jonathan. “It could be an electric cat.” After a minute,

Jonathan said “Can you turn it back on? We will follow it.”

“No wait,” said Sam. “Let's wait until after dinner, just as Ketasha said. Then when it gets dark and the cat stays out we can follow it.”

“Yes,” said Jonathan, excited, “and I can attach this little transmitter to its collar. Then we can follow it with our iPhones.”

“That's the plan,” said Sam. “Meanwhile let's go look for the dog. Ketasha, you hide that in your barn again for later.”

Ketasha ran back to the barn with the robot cat. She instructed and scolded Lex Not To Tell Mommy and Daddy about Josie. She knew even if he did they wouldn't believe him. She had a hard time getting him to leave the barn because he wanted to play with the robot.

Jonathan and Samantha were just about to drive away when the Sooners came back. Buster got out of the car with them.

It turned out that Buster was over by the water pumping stations on Rockland avenue, just circling around like he expected somebody to come and meet him.

While Mr. Sooner took Buster out back to clip him to the run line and Mrs. Sooner was talking to the teenagers, the Sooner kids came over to talk to Ketasha and Lex.

“Does he know,” said Mike, when he saw Lex.

“Know what,” said Lex. “I know lots of things”

“Yes,” he knows,” said Ketasha. “So do Jonathan and Samantha. They said they wouldn't tell. They want to come back after dinner and follow Josie.”

“That sounds like a good idea,” said Katrina. “Maybe she'll go to the same place Buster did.”

“Buster is a robot too” said Timmy.

“Buster is a robot too!” said Lex, excited. He started to run toward the dog.

“Lex, stay here!” shouted Ketasha. Lex stopped right away.

“Yes, I found Buster's switch” said Mike. “We turned him off in the van. Mom and Dad didn't see.”

“And then we turned him back on,” said Timmy. “Mom and Dad couldn't tell.”

“Well, I guess since you found your dog, we'll be leaving,” said Jonathan, purposely loud enough so the kids could hear. “We might come back later tonight to see if anything happens.” He looked right at Ketasha.

Ketasha knew that meant that she needed to turn Josie back on tonight after dinner. She nodded her head so Jonathan could see.

Jonathan and Samantha drove away in Samantha's jeep. The Sooners went back in their house, and Ketasha and Lex went inside.

Chapter 11

That night, after dinner, Ketasha and Lex went out to the barn to turn Josie back on and let her out. Jonathan and Samantha were waiting for them.

“OK,” said Jonathan, “here we go.” He put his transmitter on Josie's collar and Ketasha turned the switch. Josie immediately jumped out of Ketasha's arms and ran out the open door.

“She's getting away!” cried Lex.

“Don't worry,” said Samantha, holding up her iPhone, “we know exactly where she is going.” She showed Lex and Ketasha the GPS readout tracing the location of the robot. According to that, the robot cat was now hiding under the barn.

“Now you two go inside and do what you always do, or your parents will come out here looking and spoil everything,” said Jonathan.

This was very hard to do for both Ketasha and Lex but they did it.

Ketasha went straight up to her room and told her parents she didn't feel well and wanted to go to bed early. Lex followed the idea and did the same thing. Then they both sat up watching out the windows to see if anything happened. By the time it did, they were both asleep.

Chapter 12

The telephone rang.. Ketasha was awake in an instant and running toward the phone. She opened the door to Mom and Dad's room just as Dad was answering the phone.

“Hello,” he said. “Yes, Jonathan and Samantha, I remember. Yes, the dog. The pumping station. There's a what?! Our cat? Are you sure? OK, OK. Did you call the police? OK, good. Don't get any closer until the police arrive.”

“Dan, what's going on,” said Mom. Whenever she called him Dan instead of Hun it was something serious.

Dan was now getting out of bed and getting dressed. “Those two teenagers apparently uncovered a robbery ring operating out of the old Digital plant over on Parker Street. They saw some strange men in a van capture Josie and drive away with her and they followed. First the van went to the Rockland avenue pumping station to pick up more animals and then it went to the Digital plant. They say, and I'm not sure I believe them, that our cat and lots of other pets were secretly replaced by robots and those robots were stealing jewelry...”

“What!” said Mom, now wide awake and out of bed, “what jewelry? My jewelry?” She went over to the corkboard where all her earrings were hanging. “My diamond earrings!”

“Oh man,” said Dad, “those two kids said they needed help looking for Josie.”

That's when they noticed Ketasha standing there. “Dad, you have to let

me come with you. Jonathan and Samantha only found out because I helped them. And I want to know what happened to Josie.” Katasha stamped her feet.

“Where are you going, Dan?” asked Mom. “That’s a crime scene with dangerous men. You could get hurt.”

Ketasha felt like screaming as loud and long as she could scream because she felt Mom and Dad were giving up on Josie. Instead she did the absolute best she could to be calm. “Mom! Dad! Josie could be killed! We have to help!”

Mom and Dad both looked at her for a long minute.

“Those two kids called the police already. By the time we get anywhere near the place, it will be all over.” said Dad. “You can come, Ketasha, only if you stay in the car and do exactly what I say. We are only going to see if the police found Josie. Do you understand?”

“Yes Daddy, yes Daddy.”

“Ella, the police should be calling any minute now. Call my cell when they do,” said Dad. “I promise you we will not go anywhere that isn’t safe.”

Mom was not at all happy about the whole thing but she nodded her head yes. Ketasha and Dad went and got in the car and drove over toward the old Digital plant on Parker Street. There were police cars from all four of the surrounding towns going toward the plant, and some state police too. Dad turned down Field Street, just outside the plant fence, and they saw Samantha’s jeep. Samantha was still sitting in it, watching the cat tracker and talking to Jonathan.

“The police haven’t closed in yet, they are still getting into position,” said Samantha. “Jonathan is with the captain over there. The robbers are behind that helipad, over there. If you look closely, you can see the lights of the trailer they are using.”

“So this isn’t over yet,” said Dad. “Ketasha, you stay close.”

Ketasha was so nervous and worried about Josie that she almost couldn’t sit still. They all waited for what seemed like hours. Then, suddenly, there was a

loud noise.

“This is the police,” the police captain announced over a bullhorn. “You are surrounded. Come out slowly with your hands in the air.” Suddenly the whole area was lit up with brilliant light. The smuggler trailer was plainly visible.

Bang! Bang! BANG! Ketasha jumped. Smoke started pouring out of the trailer. Men were running everywhere. That's when Ketasha noticed that there also were lots of cats and dogs running out from the smoke too.

“Dad, look! Look! I think that is Buster! And that is Daisy! Josie!” Ketasha started to run but Dad caught her just in time. Katasha started yelling for Josie. She watched as Josie ran right toward them and then veered away into the backyard of a nearby house because a dog ran in front of her. “Dad, let me go get her, let me go get her or she'll get lost or even killed.”

“No, too dangerous,” said Dad.

“Dad,” pleaded Ketasha, “this is why we came here! Please!”

“No, too dangerous,” said Dad.

“I'll go with her, Mr. Alder. She's right, the cat will be disoriented and if Ketasha calls her it will probably come to her.”

“All right, go, but be careful!” Dad got out his cell phone and called home.

Sam and Ketasha got out of the jeep and ran down the street to the house where Josie went. The house looked familiar to Katasha but she didn't have time to think about it. All the lights were on in this house and every house on the street. Ketasha and Sam went into the back yard and Ketasha started calling.

“Here, Josie, here, Josie”

Josie didn't come out from wherever she was hiding. “If only I had her treats,” cried Ketasha.

“Her treats?” asked Sam. “Why?”

“Because she always comes when she hears them,” said Ketasha, who was

starting to get tears in her eyes. She looked around and suddenly saw that this was Ginny's house. Ginny had a cat too. All the lights were on in the house, Ginny had to be awake. Ketasha ran for the back door.

“Wait,” yelled Sam, “what are you doing!” Sam ran after Ketasha and got there just as Ginny was opening the back door.

“Ketasha!” cried Ginny, “what are you doing here!”

“Quick,” said Ketasha, “Josie is out here hiding and she's scared from all those men. Where's TopCat's treats? I need them to get Josie!” Ginny disappeared into her house. Her mother appeared at the door. Samantha explained what was going on.

Ginny came back with two treat cans. The two girls started shaking the cans and calling. “Here, Josie, here, Josie. Treats!”

Sure enough, Josie came out from under the bushes, shaking and crying and very happy to let Ketasha pick her up and hold her in her arms. Ketasha felt for a switch and only found fur. Not a robot. Ketasha was so happy she started to laugh and cry at the same time. So did Ginny and Samantha and Ginny's Mom.

Ketasha turned to Ginny. “What about TopCat? Did he get taken too?”

“No,” said Ginny, “TopCat never goes out.”

“Come on, Ketasha,” said Sam. “Let's get back to your Dad.” They said thank you and good night to Ginny. Ketasha and Sam went back to the jeep, where Dad was sitting and talking on his phone. He immediately smiled and laughed when he saw Ketasha with the cat.

“You found her, hurray!” cheered Dad. “Come on, sweetie, our work is done here. It looks like the police have captured most of the robbers and taken over the trailer. Let's go home.”

And so they did. Mom and Lex were waiting and they all had a big hug and hot chocolate. While Ketasha was telling Mom and Dad the whole story, with help from Lex, they all heard lots of barking outside. There was Buster running

up the street, followed by Lucy and Toto. Mr. Sooner was right there to open the door for Buster. Mom and Dad and Lex and Ketasha all cheered and waved to Mr. Sooner. Then Ketasha finished the story and everybody finally went to bed and slept peacefully.

THE END