

THE
BIRTHDAY CAKE
CHA CHA



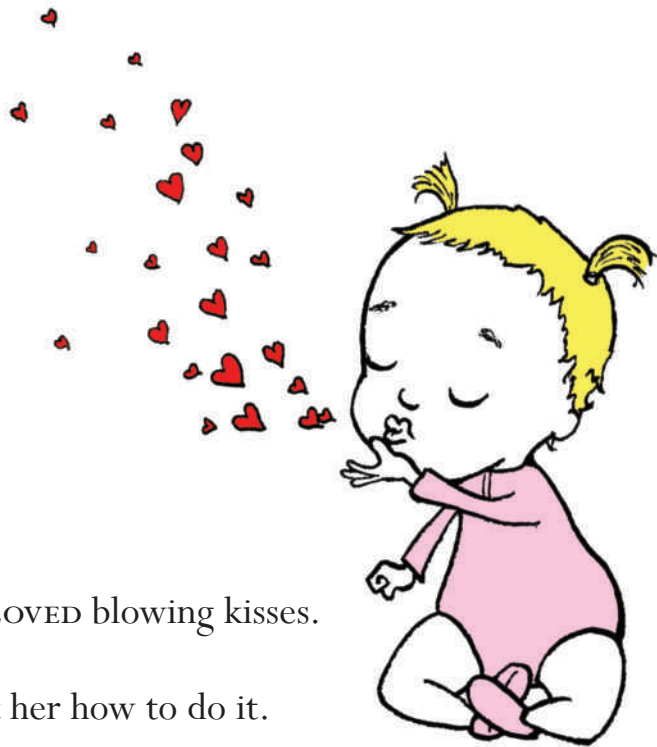
by Heather Atkinson

illustrated by Sam Hamilton

**THE
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CHA CHA**

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To all my darling girls and their beloved cats.



NORAH ROSE LOVED blowing kisses.

Momma had taught her how to do it.

First, Norah Rose planted a kiss in the palm of one hand.

Then, she opened her palm wide.

To send the kiss on its way, Norah Rose sucked in a big mouthful of air.

Then she blew all the air out, imagining she was the wind blowing hard in a storm.



Norah Rose could almost see her kiss fluttering away to find lips to settle on like a butterfly seeking a bloom.

Then Norah Rose waited.

She waited for the smile.

When Norah Rose blew someone a kiss, there was always a smile.

And when someone blew a kiss to Norah Rose, she felt the kiss settle on her rosebud lips and felt the bloom of her own smile.

Norah Rose loved blowing kisses because kisses made people smile.

One special day, Norah Rose discovered something else that made people smile.

ON THAT DAY, Norah Rose knew when she woke up from her nap that something special was about to happen.

Hinty knew it too. He was snuggled beside her. His eyes were wide open, and his ears stood up like two finger puppets.

Momma came into Norah Rose's tiny bedroom. *Norah Rose*, said Momma, *it's your birthday!*

Momma lifted Norah Rose from her crib and carried her into the tiny living room. Hinty tiptoed behind. He was curious.

Norah Rose saw that the tiny room was crowded with Momma's friends. Each friend carried colourful paper tied with bright ribbons and each held a piece of pink string with a pink balloon floating above.

Norah Rose looked at Hinty. *Birthday?*

Norah Rose knew nothing about birthdays.

But Hinty did.

He knew birthdays meant Momma gave him trout dinner from a tin.

Then Norah Rose noticed something she had never seen before.

The something was sitting by itself on the tray of her high chair.



The something was pink. It looked like a small pink cloud, the sort Norah Rose liked to watch when the sun went down for its nap.

In the middle of the pink something, a little flame wiggled and wagged on top of a small pink stick.

Norah Rose was not happy to see a pink something sitting on the tray of her high chair. And she did not like the little flame that was wiggling and wagging.

Norah Rose felt her rosebud lips tremble.

Momma giggled. *It's your birthday cake, Norah Rose!*

Birthday cake, thought Norah Rose. *I do not want birthday cake.*

Norah Rose was hungry. Norah Rose wanted food.

Momma took the birthday cake away. She gave Norah Rose a slice of brown bread with avocado and hummus and sprouts and seeds sprinkled on top.

Norah Rose stopped crying. She sucked a bit of pomegranate juice from her sippy cup.

Then she ate her food. Food made her feel better.

Now you can have some birthday cake, said Momma.

Momma put a bit of cake on the tray of Norah Rose's high chair. Momma cut the rest of the cake into big slices and gave a slice to each of her friends.

Yum, said Momma.

Birthday cake is delicious, said one of Momma's friends.

Momma opened up a tin of trout dinner. She put a spoonful into Hinty's bowl.

Norah Rose looked down at the bit of birthday cake on her tray. She put her nose close to it and sniffed. The cake did not smell like anything Norah Rose had smelled before. Norah Rose frowned and clamped her rosebud lips shut.

Norah Rose did not want birthday cake. She wanted to push the bit of cake off the tray and onto the floor.

Hinty looked up from his trout dinner. *Just taste it, Norah Rose. I think you'll like it.*

Norah Rose sighed. She opened her mouth and stuck out her tongue. Momma placed the bit of cake on Norah Rose's tongue.

Norah Rose sucked on the cake. She closed her eyes.

Momma and Momma's friends waited.

Norah Rose felt her rosebud lips twitch. Then her lips bloomed into a smile.

Norah Rose stuck out her tongue again. Norah Rose wanted more birthday cake.

Birthday cake made her smile.

Momma smiled too. She gave Norah Rose and everyone else more cake. The cake slowly disappeared until there was nothing left but a wisp of pink.

Norah Rose stopped smiling.

Norah Rose wanted the birthday cake to come back.

She started to cry.

Don't worry, Norah Rose, said Momma, there will be many more birthday cakes. You will just have to wait.

Norah Rose stopped crying. *Many more birthday cakes?*

But when?

THE NEXT MORNING, Momma scattered 52 puzzle pieces on the floor of the tiny living room. She sat Norah Rose down beside the puzzle pieces.

Momma gave Norah Rose a new puzzle every day. Norah Rose was very good at fitting the pieces together.

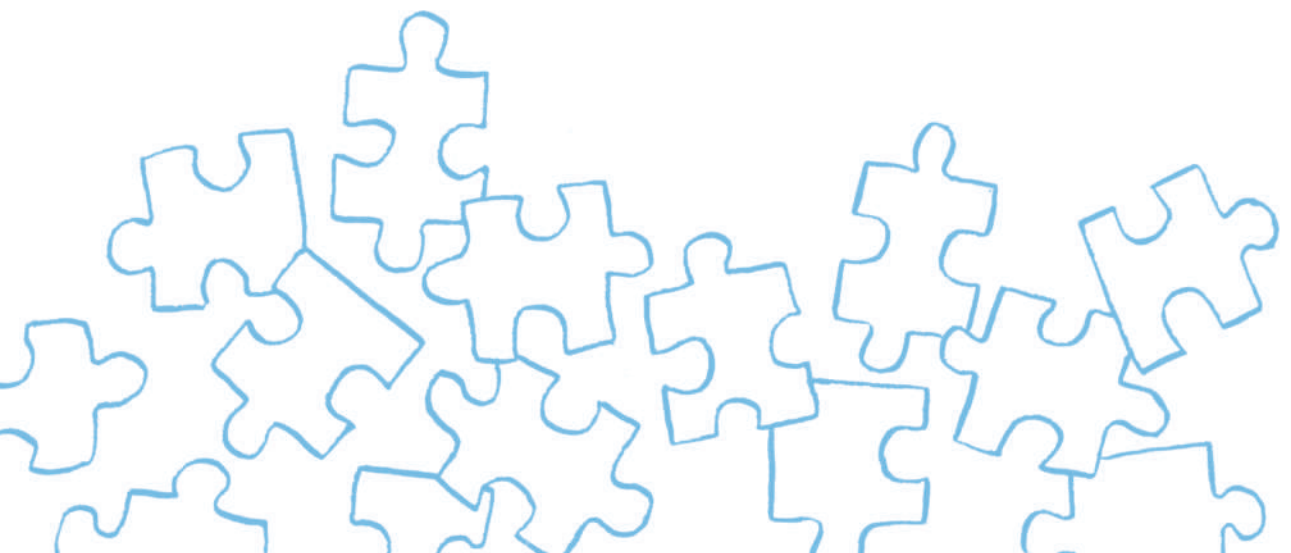
To make Norah Rose smile, Momma turned on her music player and played Norah Rose's favourite songs. Norah Rose liked the songs because they made her waggle her hips and wiggle her arms and shake her booty to the beat.

The songs also helped Norah Rose think about how she could fit the puzzle pieces together.

Today Norah Rose took longer than usual to finish her puzzle. This was because she was thinking about birthday cake.

Norah Rose knew that birthday cake appeared on a birthday.

But she did not know when a birthday would happen again.



Norah Rose put the last puzzle piece into place and looked up at Momma.

Good job, said Momma. She took out her phone. Momma used her phone to make videos showing Norah Rose working on her puzzles. Momma sent the videos to her friends.

Norah Rose wiggled and waggled and shook her booty to the beat of the music one last time. Then she blew a kiss to Momma's phone. She knew the kiss would make Momma's friends smile.

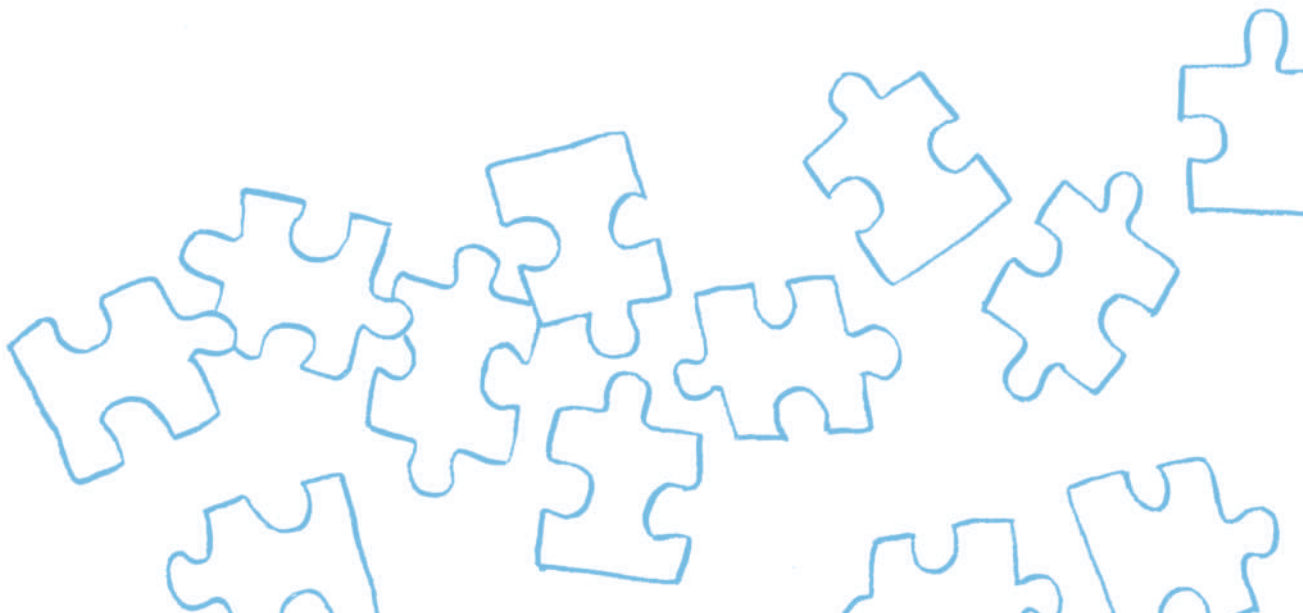
Momma's friends soon sent messages. They loved watching Norah Rose doing her puzzle and wiggling and waggling and shaking her booty to the beat of the music.

Momma read the messages to Norah Rose.

Well done, Norah Rose! said one.

You are such a smart little girl, Norah Rose! said another.

Norah Rose is a good dancer! Look how she wiggles and waggles and shakes her booty!



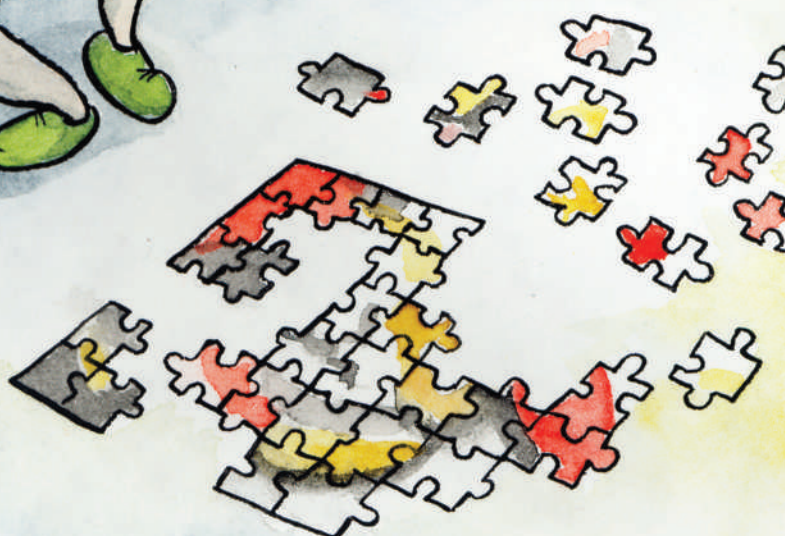
Norah Rose smiled. She was happy that Momma's friends liked watching her do her puzzle and dance. She wondered when Momma's friends would visit. Perhaps if they came again Norah Rose could eat cake.

You must be hungry, Norah Rose, said Momma. Doing puzzles and wiggling and wagging and shaking your booty is hard work.

Momma sat Norah Rose in her high chair. She placed chunks of tofu and sliced egg from Grammy's chickens on the tray.

Norah Rose looked closely at the food. She saw there was no cake. Norah Rose liked tofu and sliced egg from Grammy's smiling chickens, but they did not turn her rosebud lips into a smile the way cake did.

Norah Rose sighed. *Today is not a birthday.* She ate her food slowly and thought about cake.



AFTER LUNCH it was time for a nap. Norah Rose and Hinty curled up together in Norah Rose's crib. Today Hinty was not sleepy. He had an idea that he wanted to share with Norah Rose.

He rubbed his paw gently against Norah Rose's cheek until she opened her eyes. *Let's get Momma to make cake now. Maybe we don't need to wait for a birthday.*

Norah Rose was now wide awake. She was thinking about Hinty's idea. She was thinking about cake.

Norah Rose stood up in her crib. *Momma!*

Momma rushed into Norah Rose's bedroom. *Norah Rose, said Momma, you're supposed to be sleeping. Momma was not smiling.*



Norah Rose wanted to say *Momma please make cake*. Instead she said *Momma, poo, pot*. Momma, poo and pot were the only words she knew how to say out loud.

Momma smiled. *Good girl, Norah Rose, you want to go to poo on the pot!*

Momma sat Norah Rose on her potty chair.

Norah Rose did not want to poo on the pot. She wanted Momma to make cake. So she sat and she sat until Momma grew tired and took Norah Rose off the potty.



Hinty had another idea. *If you show Momma a picture of a cake, she might make one.*

Good idea, thought Norah Rose. She tried to imagine where she could find a picture of a cake.

Then she remembered. In a picture book!

Momma had arranged Norah Rose's picture books on the shelf in her bedroom.

Norah Rose pulled every book on the shelf onto the floor. She opened each one to see what was inside. At last, she found the one she was looking for.

The cover of the book showed a picture of Max. Max was Norah Rose's stuffed bunny. In the picture, Max was looking at a cake. In the picture, Max was smiling. Norah Rose tiptoed into the kitchen. She was carrying the Max book. She held it up so that Momma could see it. Norah Rose pointed to the cake in the picture.

Momma looked at the picture. *Cake*, said Momma

Yes, thought Norah Rose. But *momma, poo and pot* came out of her mouth instead.

Momma smiled. She picked Norah Rose up and placed her back on the potty chair.

Hinty looked at Norah Rose. *Next time, try not to talk.*

Norah Rose's tummy grumbled. It was long past lunch time. Norah Rose could think of nothing but cake. Her desire for cake was becoming urgent. She wanted it now.

Norah Rose tiptoed into the living room. She was carrying the Max book. Momma was sitting on the big brown sofa typing on her computer. She was writing stories about Norah Rose and Hinty to send to her friends.

Norah Rose dropped the Max book onto the keyboard of Momma's computer.

Momma removed the Max book from the keyboard. *Yes, Norah Rose, I will read you the story.*

When Momma was done reading she handed the Max book to Norah Rose. *Please put it back on the shelf, Norah Rose.*

Then Momma went into the tiny kitchen.

Norah Rose hoped Momma would make cake.

But Momma was not making cake. Momma was washing dishes.

Norah Rose tiptoed into the kitchen carrying the Max book. She held it up so that Momma could see it.

Put the book back on the shelf, Norah Rose, said Momma. She went back to washing dishes.

Norah Rose sighed.

Hinty thought for a moment. *I guess we will have to make the cake ourselves, Norah Rose.*

Norah Rose shook her head. *We do not know how to make cake.*

Then she had an idea.

She sat on the floor and slowly turned the pages of the Max book. She looked carefully at each picture. She wanted to see everything Max did to make cake.

The first picture showed Max going to the store.

Norah Rose frowned. *Momma will never let us leave this tiny apartment by ourselves to go to the store.*

Hinty had another idea. *Maybe what we need is already here.*

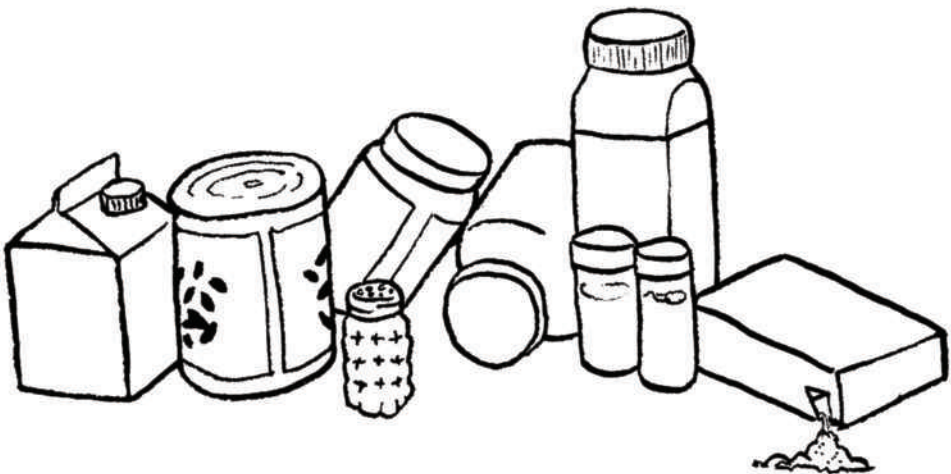
Norah Rose and Hinty looked closely at the pictures to see what Max put into his cake.

While Momma was cleaning the bathroom, Norah Rose and Hinty pulled everything they could reach out of the kitchen cupboards. They piled everything in the middle of the kitchen floor.

Norah Rose did not see anything in the pile that looked like the pictures of Max making cake in the book.

Norah Rose reached up to open the doors to the cupboards that were higher up. She nodded to Hinty. He hopped into each cupboard and shoved everything that was inside onto the floor.

Tin cans and cardboard boxes and Momma's cookbooks



tumbled out.

Momma heard the racket and rushed into the kitchen.

Norah Rose, said Momma. What a mess!

Norah Rose and Hinty watched Momma put everything back. Momma was not smiling.

Norah Rose sighed. *We haven't found any of the things we need to make cake. This means that Momma does not make cake.*

Hinty agreed. *This means that someone else brought cake on your birthday, Norah Rose.*

Norah Rose sighed. *How do we get someone else to bring cake?*





THE NEXT DAY was a Dadda day.

Momma left the tiny basement apartment on Dadda days and went somewhere else. Momma had gone somewhere else today.

On Dadda days, Norah Rose liked to curl up with Dadda on the big brown sofa and watch Team Red play hockey on the big TV. Team Red was Dadda's favorite team.

Momma did not like Norah Rose watching hockey on the big TV. She wanted Dadda to take Norah Rose outside so she could breathe some fresh air. Dadda liked to make Momma happy so he turned off the TV and dressed Norah Rose in her fluffy snow suit and tied on her hat with the red pompom.

He carried Norah Rose outside. The winter air was fresh and cold. A cloud moved in front of the sun turning it from gold to silver. Dadda placed Norah Rose into her comfy yellow sled with the plastic shield and zipped it up tight. The plastic shield kept out the cold winter wind.

Dadda pulled the yellow sled down the street toward Norah Rose's favourite park. He turned the corner and stopped in front of a tall brown house. The house had a front yard with a garden covered in a thick white blanket of snow. A sign stood in the middle of the yard. Dadda read the words on the sign to Norah Rose.

FOR SALE

Dadda looked sadly at the tall brown house.

I wish we could live in this house, said Dadda. With such a big house Momma and I would have enough room to have parties and invite all of our friends and family. I hope I can buy it when I have enough money.

Norah Rose wanted to make Dadda smile. She wanted to blow him a kiss but her mittens were stuck inside the sleeves of her snow suit. This prevented her from planting a kiss on the palm of her hand and blowing it to Dadda. Anyway, even if she had been able to blow a kiss, the kiss would have struck the sled's plastic shield and fallen like a butterfly with a limp wing.

Dadda sighed and turned away from the tall brown house. He slowly pulled Norah Rose back to their tiny basement apartment.

Norah Rose liked the tiny basement apartment. She did not care where she lived as long as Dadda and Momma and Hinty lived there too. Still, she thought it would be fun to plant basil and carrots and morning glories and sunflowers in the front garden of the tall brown house. The house was close to her favourite park.

Norah Rose watched people walk by. Everyone was hurrying to get out of the cold, and everyone was frowning. *I wish I could make everyone smile, thought Norah Rose. But I can't blow kisses when I'm stuck inside my sled.*

This reminded Norah Rose of something else. Something else that made people smile.

Cake!

And that reminded Norah Rose that she and Hinty had not figured out how to get cake into the tiny basement apartment.



DADDA BROUGHT Norah Rose inside. Norah Rose had had plenty of fresh air. Now it was time for food.

Norah Rose loved Dadda's food. Today he made her a sandwich with peanut butter spread on snowy white bread. The peanut butter came from the jar that had the picture of the cookies on the front.

Afterward Dadda gave Norah Rose a little treat. One tiny donut.

The donut reminded Norah Rose of cake.

When they were done eating, Dadda dressed himself and Norah Rose and Hinty in their Team Red jerseys, and they settled down on the big brown sofa again to watch the Big Hockey Game.



Dadda's phone soon began chirping. This meant a Team Red fan wanted to talk to Dadda. Dadda wrote stories about Team Red on his computer. Fans liked to read what Dadda wrote.

Now Dadda was talking to a fan on his phone.

Yeah, Norah Rose heard Dadda say to the fan, I don't know what to do for her birthday.

Birthday?

Birthday was a very important word. This was the word

Norah Rose had been waiting for.

Birthday meant cake!

She listened carefully to what Dadda was saying to the fan on his phone.

This tiny basement apartment is too small, said Dadda. We need to buy a nice big house. But we have to save our money. This means I won't have enough money to buy a birthday present for Norah Rose's Momma this year. Not even a cake.

Norah Rose was shocked. *Not even a cake?*

Momma's birthday was about to happen but there would be NO CAKE!

Momma's birthday comes every year when it is cold and dark outside, Hinty explained. I am sorry there will be no cake for you and Momma, Norah Rose. No trout dinner for me either.

Norah Rose's rosebud lips trembled. *But there **has** to be cake!*

Hinty thought for a moment. *Norah Rose, Dadda is not going to bring cake, so it is up to us get cake for Momma.*

Norah Rose nodded. Momma needed cake for her birthday, and Norah Rose and Hinty were determined to get it for her.

Dadda continued to watch Team Red on the big TV and talk to fans on his phone.

But Norah Rose and Hinty were thinking about cake.

They got down from the sofa and tiptoed into Norah Rose's bedroom. Hinty saw that the Max book was back on the shelf. *Norah Rose, we need to show the book to Dadda. He will help us get cake for Momma.*

They tiptoed back into the living room. Norah Rose was carrying the Max book.

She held the book up in front of Dadda so that he could see the book but not the TV.

Please, Norah Rose, not now, said Dadda. *Team Red is about to win.*

Norah Rose frowned. She did not want to know about Team Red.

She wanted to know how to get cake for Momma on her birthday.

Norah Rose climbed onto the sofa beside Dadda. She placed the Max book on Dadda's lap.

Dadda looked down at the book. He sighed and pressed the MUTE button on the TV control. Dadda read the story about Max and the cake to Norah Rose, but while he was reading he also watched Team Red on the TV.

Hinty was crouched in the clementine box on the table behind Norah Rose and Dadda. There were no clementines left in the box because Norah Rose had eaten them all.

Hinty was paying attention to the words in the story that Dadda read.

When he finished reading, Dadda turned off MUTE and went back to watching TV and talking to fans on his phone.

On TV, Team Red was doing something that made Dadda and the fans very excited.

Hinty and Norah Rose sighed. Dadda was not helping them get cake.

Hinty pointed at the fridge. *I have another idea. Follow me, Norah Rose. Bring the book.*

He hopped down from the clementine box and tiptoed into the kitchen. Norah Rose tiptoed after him. She was holding the Max book.

Hinty looked at the magnetic alphabet letters that were lined up in the middle of the fridge door. Then he looked down at the Max book. Then Hinty stretched up onto his hind legs and with his front paws swiped four of the letters, one after another, onto the floor.

Norah Rose stared down at the scattered letters.

KEAC

Norah Rose was puzzled. *Now what?*

Hinty pointed at Dadda. *Show Dadda these letters.*

Norah Rose picked up the K, the E, the C and the A and tiptoed to the big brown sofa. She dropped the letters onto Dadda's lap.

What is it, Norah Rose? said Dadda. He was still watching Team Red on the TV. Dadda sounded grumpy.

Norah Rose pointed to the letters.

Dadda sighed and pushed MUTE. He looked at the letters in his lap.

A C K E

Acke, said Dadda. *That's not a real word, Norah Rose.*

Hinty tiptoed over. He looked at the letters. He looked at Norah Rose. *Move them around.*

Norah Rose moved the letters so they looked like this:

C E A K

Dadda looked at the new arrangement. *Norah Rose, Ceak is not a word either.*

Norah Rose moved the letters again.

A K C E

Dadda shook his head. *Nope, he said. These are not words, Norah Rose.*

Dadda looked at the letters.

He took the letters from his lap and put them onto the coffee table. Dadda moved the C so that it came first, followed by the A, the K and the E.

C A K E

There, Norah Rose, said Dadda. He was smiling. C-A-K-E. That is the word for what we eat when it is somebody's birthday.

Hinty looked at Norah Rose. *Do not try to say it out loud, Norah Rose. You will just end up back on the potty.*

Norah Rose nodded. Hinty was right. She only knew how to say *momma, poo* and *pot*. She did not know how to say *cake*.

Instead she pointed at the letters C-A-K-E and waited for Dadda to say, *Let's make cake.*

But Dadda was looking at the TV again.

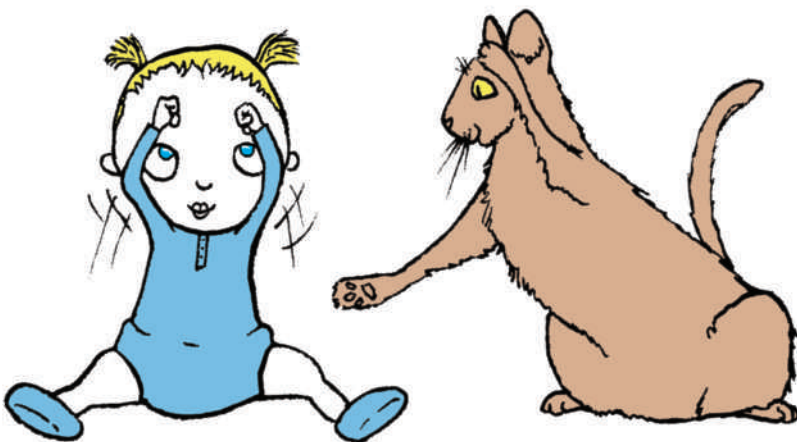
Norah Rose sighed. Dadda was too busy watching Team Red to make cake.

She picked up the four letters and carried them to the kitchen. She stuck them back on the fridge door. Hinty moved the letters around so that they spelled the word C-A-K-E.

Norah Rose placed the Max book on the kitchen floor and opened it up. She looked at the pictures again.

The pictures showed her what Max used to make cake.

The first picture showed Max cracking two eggs into a bowl and then stirring the egg yolks and the whites with a fork.



The picture gave Norah Rose an idea. She took her fists and bumped them, one after another, against her forehead. She did this two times. Then she fell gently to the floor. Then she rolled around.

Hinty looked at Norah Rose. He understood what she was doing. She was pretending to be two eggs cracked into a bowl.

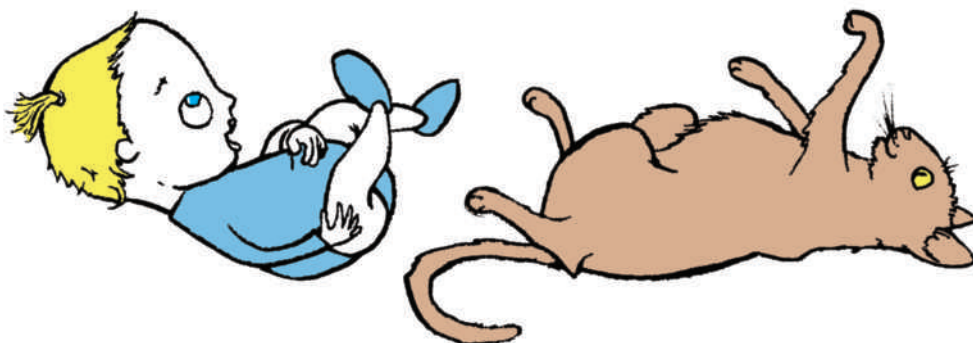
Hinty copied everything Norah Rose did. He smacked one paw against his forehead and then the other, then gently lowered himself to the floor.

The next picture showed Max pouring something white from a bag. The following picture showed Max pouring milk from a carton into the bowl.

Norah Rose tried to imagine pouring herself out of something. It took her a few moments to figure it out.

She spread her arms wide and looked down as if she was about to dive head first onto the floor.

She was the milk and she was pouring herself into a bowl.



The next picture showed Max beating everything together.

Hinty smiled at Norah Rose. *We will show Dadda that we want to make cake.*

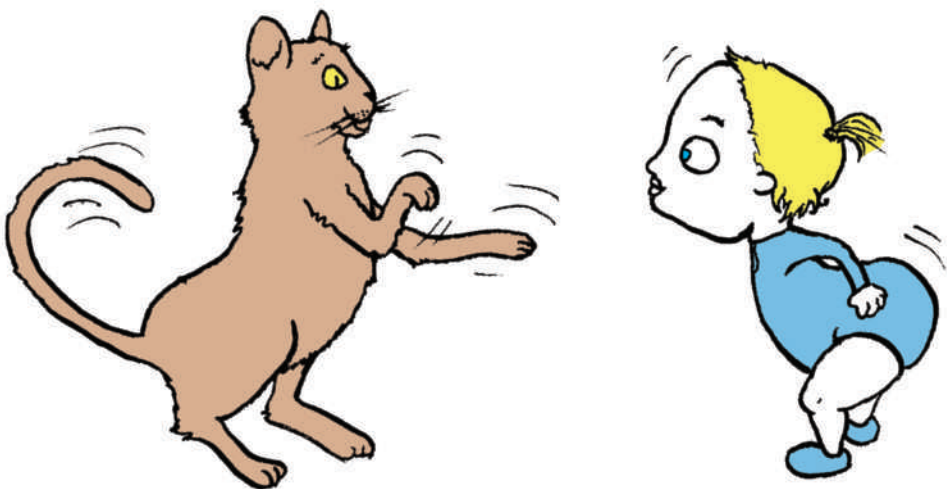
Hinty stood up on his hind legs. He wobbled a little until he could stand still without falling over.

Using his front paws he took hold of Norah Rose's hands and danced her through a wild and crazy cha-cha-cha. The two of them were pretending to mix the cake batter.

They waggled their arms, cha-cha-cha, stepped forward and backward together, cha-cha-cha, and wiggled and waggled their hips from side to side, cha-cha-cha.

They shook their booties back and forth, cha-cha-cha.

They did these moves over and over and over again. At last they were too dizzy to stay on their feet and together



they toppled onto the floor.

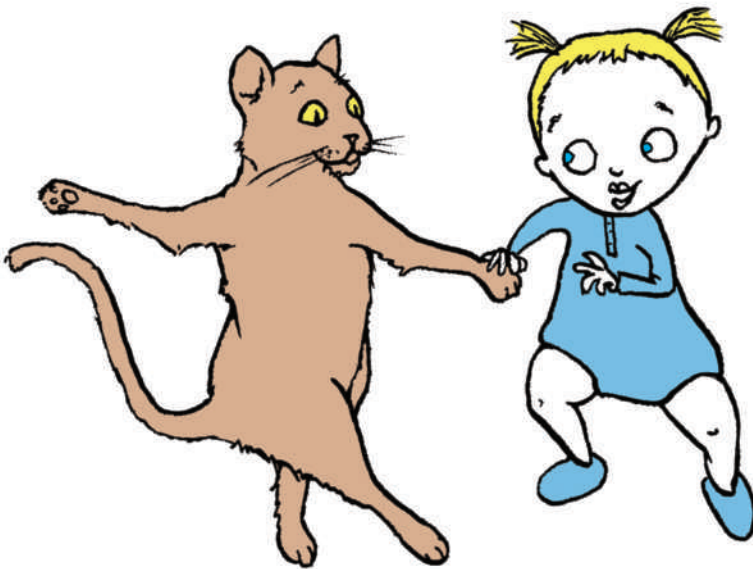
Norah Rose giggled. *Dancing is fun!*

When she was done feeling dizzy, Norah Rose looked at the Max book again. The next few pictures showed Max pouring everything from the bowl into a pan, sliding the pan into the oven and watching through the window in the oven door as the cake batter rose higher and higher.

Norah Rose and Hinty were perfect dance partners. They knew exactly what to do. They slowly rose from the floor together. Then Norah Rose raised her hands, and Hinty raised his paws.

Norah Rose and Hinty were pretending to be cake rising in a pan.

The story ended when Max blew out a candle and ate a piece of his cake.



Norah Rose and Hinty cha-cha-cha-ed backward and forward while they blew out pretend candles and stuffed pretend cake into their mouths.

They danced their birthday cake cha-cha-cha over and over until Hinty was as comfortable dancing on two legs as he was walking on four.

They danced one final cha-cha-cha and then they blew kisses to each other and bowed.

Norah Rose pointed to Momma's music player. *Now we need music!*

Hinty frowned. *Norah Rose, you're not allowed to touch Momma's music player. We need Dadda to turn on the music.*

Norah Rose tiptoed back to the sofa. Dadda was still watching Team Red and talking to fans on his phone.

Norah Rose pointed to Momma's music player. It was sitting on the kitchen counter.



Please, Norah Rose, not now, said Dadda. Team Red is going to win any second!

Norah Rose was tired of hearing about Team Red. Norah Rose picked up the TV remote.

She pushed MUTE.

She pointed at Momma's music player.

Dadda sighed. *Okay, Norah Rose, I will turn on the music.*

Norah Rose and Hinty tiptoed back to the kitchen and started dancing cha-cha-cha. It was fun dancing with the music.

Dadda went back to watching Team Red. The fans on the TV were jumping up and down and making a lot of noise.

Dadda looked away from the TV for a moment to see what Norah Rose and Hinty were doing. *Norah Rose, the music is too noisy.*

At that moment, there came from the TV a big whooping noise. The fans were shouting: *Yay Team Red!*

Dadda turned back to the TV in time to see the fans jumping up and down, hugging each other and twirling each other around, and wiggling and wagging their Team Red sticks in the air.

Oh no, said Dadda. Team Red won but I was not watching!

Dadda's phone began chirping, and this time the chirping did not stop. The fans wanted to talk to Dadda about Team Red.

But Dadda did not want to talk on his phone.

Dadda was watching Norah Rose and Hinty dance.

Wow! said Dadda. *I did not know you two could dance!*

Hinty was standing as tall as could be on his hind legs, wiggling his hips, wagging his paws and twirling Norah Rose around and around.

They were performing their wild and crazy cha-cha-cha, and this time Dadda was watching.

Dadda saw the word C-A-K-E spelled out on the fridge door and the Max book lying open on the kitchen floor.

Dadda knew right away what Norah Rose and Hinty were doing. *Norah Rose and Hinty, you're dancing the birthday cake cha-cha!*

Dadda's phone was still chirping but Dadda did not care. Dadda did not care about Team Red right now.

Dadda was too busy taking a video of Norah Rose and Hinty dancing the birthday cake cha-cha. Dadda wanted all the fans to see it.

When Norah Rose and Hinty were done dancing, they lay down on the kitchen floor together. Dancing the birthday cake cha-cha had tuckered them out. It was time for a nap.

Dadda put Norah Rose into her crib. Hinty hopped in and snuggled beside her.

Soon they were both fast asleep.

Of course they were dreaming of birthday cake.



WHEN NORAH ROSE and Hinty woke up, they saw that Momma had come back from wherever she had gone. Momma was cooking fish for supper. Hinty knew Momma would put a morsel of fish into his bowl.

After supper, Momma and Dadda washed the dishes together. When they were done Dadda showed Momma his computer.

We have made you a birthday surprise, Dadda said.

While Norah Rose and Hinty were napping, Dadda used his computer to make a very special birthday video for Momma.

Momma read the words Dadda had written on the video: *Birthday Cake Cha Cha to Momma from Norah Rose and Hinty.*

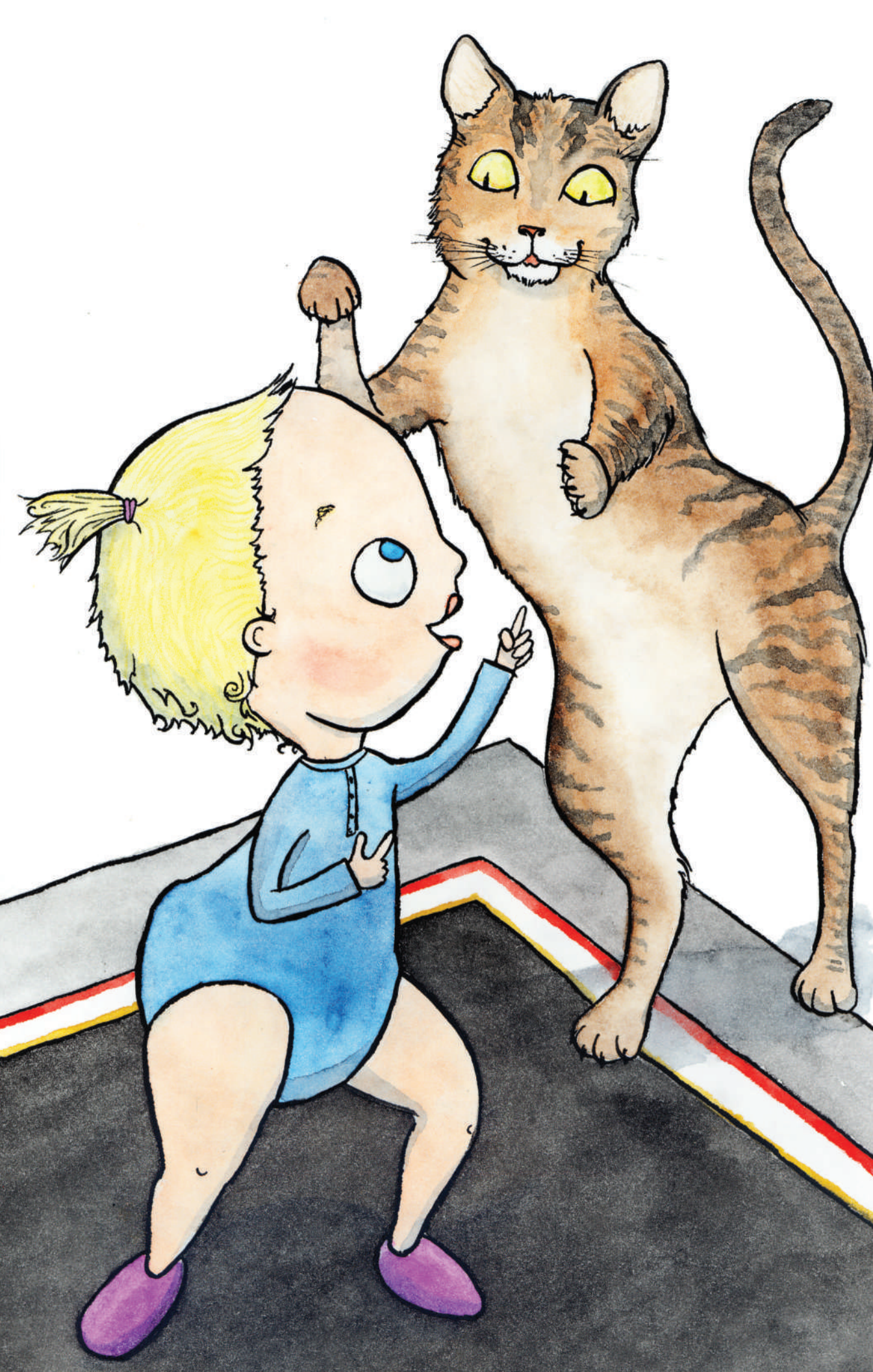
Momma clapped her hands and giggled as she watched Norah Rose and Hinty dance the birthday cake cha-cha.

Then Momma stood up. She wiggled her hips and waggled her arms, cha-cha-cha, and shook her booty, cha-cha-cha, in time to the music, cha-cha-cha.

Momma was having fun doing the birthday cake cha-cha in the tiny basement apartment.

This is the best birthday present ever, said Momma. She hugged Norah Rose and Dadda and scratched Hinty in the special spot behind his ears.

Suddenly they heard someone knocking on the door.



Dadda opened the door. He stared into the hallway.

A crowd of people wearing Team Red jerseys and toques had gathered there.

Each held a cake covered in red frosting and flickering candle light.

Momma's eyes opened wide.

So many fans carrying so many birthday cakes!

It seemed as if spring had come, and a garden of bright red roses had suddenly bloomed in the hallway of their tiny basement apartment.

Norah Rose clapped her hands and shrieked.

Cake!

This time she said it out loud.

Then everyone sang *Happy Birthday* to Norah Rose's Momma.

The fans had watched Dadda's video of Norah Rose and Hinty doing the birthday cake cha-cha. They knew Momma needed cake for her birthday.

Everyone was smiling!

Where can we put all of these wonderful people and all of these wonderful cakes? said Momma. They can't all fit into our tiny basement apartment.

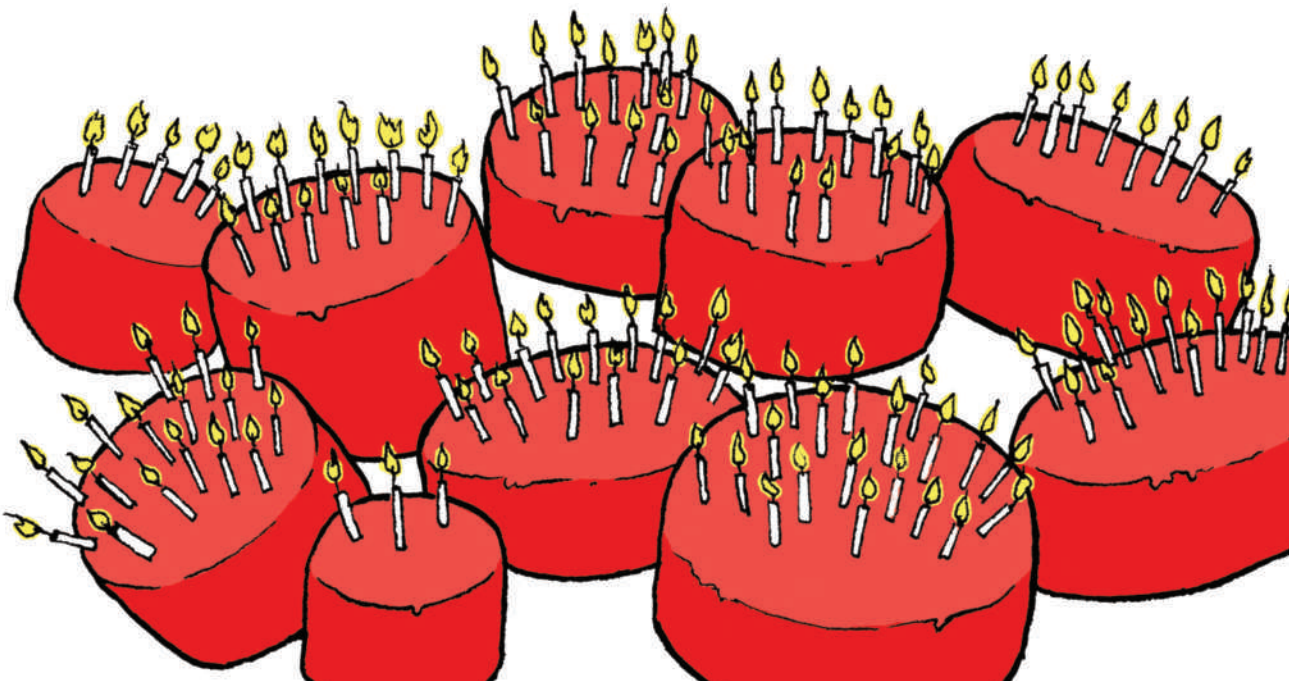
But Norah Rose knew what to do.

She pointed to the door that led outside.

Dadda and Momma understood. It was time for a happy birthday street party!

They put on their snow togs, and Momma carried her music player into the cold dark night and turned up the volume so everyone could hear the music.

Outside, the street glowed with candle light from one end to the other. Hundreds of fans had gathered, each wearing a Team Red jersey and toque and each carrying a red cake flickering with candles.



Hinty turned to Norah Rose and blew her a kiss. *Shall we dance?*

Norah Rose felt Hinty's kiss settle on her cheek and she smiled. *Of course!*

Hinty wobbled up onto his hind legs.

Then he reached out to Norah Rose with his front paws.

Together, the pair started the opening moves for the birthday cake cha-cha.

Everyone pointed. *Look at that: Hinty and Norah Rose dancing the birthday cake cha-cha.*

Norah Rose and Hinty cha-cha-cha-ed through the golden river of candle light and back again.

Momma taught everyone how to do the birthday cake cha-cha.

Soon they were all cha-cha-cha-ing on that cold dark night with their faces glowing in the candle light.

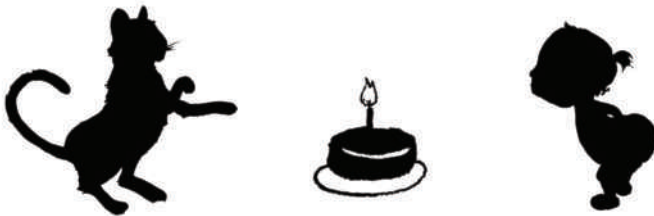
Norah Rose smiled. She would always smile when she thought of so many cakes and so many smiles blooming on Momma's birthday.

Soon the moon rose, and in the silver light the stars faded and only wisps of cake and candle smoke remained. The night had turned very cold and very dark, and yet the people smiled as they said goodnight and returned to their homes dancing the birthday cake cha-cha.

Now that was the best birthday ever, said Momma as she tucked Norah Rose and Hinty into bed.

But Momma was wrong.

The best birthday ever was about to get better.



THE NEXT MORNING Norah Rose awoke later than usual.

Mornings were usually dark when Norah Rose got up to eat breakfast with Dadda, but this morning a bright yellow ribbon of sunlight stretched from the window of Norah Rose's bedroom to the floor.

Dadda was standing over Norah Rose's crib.

Norah Rose saw that Dadda was excited about something.

We're all going for a walk, said Dadda.

He dressed Norah Rose in her snow togs.

Norah Rose wondered why they were going for a walk so soon after waking up. She had not eaten breakfast. Then she remembered that her tummy was still full of Momma's birthday cake.

Together they all set off toward Norah Rose's favourite park. Hinty was having fun hopping along snowbanks beside them.

Dadda turned the corner at the end of the street.

He stopped in front of the tall brown house.

Dadda pointed to the big sign in the middle of the front yard.

Momma read the sign out loud.

Sold, she said. Momma was not smiling. Momma looked sad.

Norah Rose wanted to blow Momma a kiss to make her smile, but Norah Rose was wearing her mittens so that was impossible.

Dadda took something out of his pocket. It was a golden key.

He handed it to Momma.

Happy birthday! said Dadda.

Momma looked puzzled.

Dadda pointed to the tall brown house.

He smiled, *Welcome to our new house!*

But the sign says SOLD, said Momma.

Yes, said Dadda. *Sold to us! I was sad that I could not buy you a birthday present or a birthday cake or have a birthday party. I was saving our money. I was worried we would not have enough money to buy this house. But we did.*

Thanks to Norah Rose and Hinty you got cake on your birthday and a wonderful birthday present and a party.

Momma hugged Dadda and Norah Rose and scratched Hinty in the special spot behind his ears. *Now surely this is the best birthday ever*, she said.

Hinty turned to Norah Rose and blew her a kiss. *Shall we dance?*

Norah Rose smiled as Hinty wobbled onto his hind legs and reached out for her.

And together they danced the birthday cake cha-cha up the front walk and into the front door of their new house.

THE END



