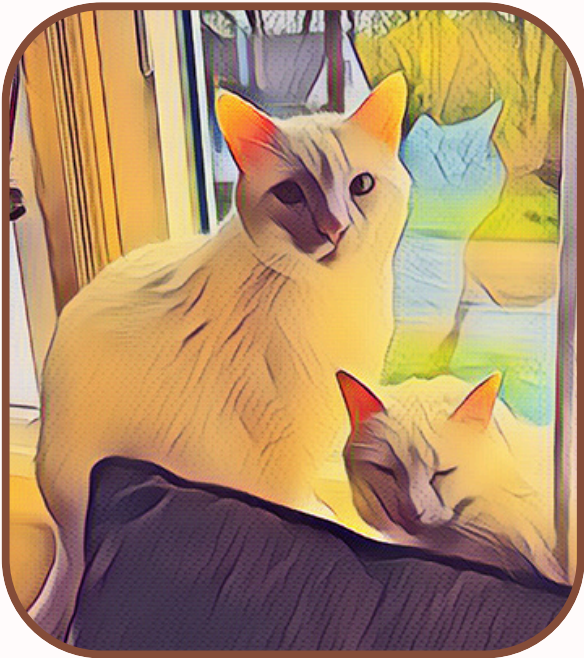


# Good Boy Cookie

## A Buster Brown Misadventure

by Meredith Byrne



The afternoon sun streamed through the living room window, warming Artemis and Luna as they kept vigil on the sill.

Luna's ears twitched. "I think I heard the car door," she whispered, tail flicking.

"Could be the snuggle girl. Or the snack-bringer," Artemis mused.

Luna squinted. "Could be both. We need confirmation. I'll stay on watch."

"What should I do?"

"Check the other door," Luna sighed.

"Just in case."

Artemis leapt into action - down from the window, across the end table, over the back of the couch, and into the hallway toward the kitchen.

There, Buster lay napping in a love-worn doggie bed, wrapped in his blanket like a retired general.

However, Artemis never made it to the side door, or to Buster.

Something wonderful had distracted him!

Someone had left a backpack in the hall, its zipper tragically ajar. Inside: a half-eaten sandwich and a squashed granola bar. No matter - there was room, Artemis was sure of it. He had never met a box or bag he didn't want to crawl into.

Just as he crouched low to slink inside, a soft snort came from the lump in the bed. Buster opened one eye.

"I see what you're doing over there," he said without moving. "And I want the snacks."

"You can't eat granola," Artemis mewed.

"Then give me the sandwich. And then you can keep the bag and play hide and seek all by yourself without having to hear my belly rumble."

Artemis tilted his head, considering the last time Buster's belly rumbled.

"Deal." He dragged the sandwich to his elderly roommate, then vanished into the backpack.

Moments later, just as Buster swallowed the last corner of cheese, the front door clicked.

"Positions!" Luna hissed from the window, flattening herself behind the curtain.

Buster rose from his blanket, groaned, and trotted toward the door as if he'd been loyally waiting there all day.



The door opened. "Aww, hi Buster!" the snack-bringer cooed, scratching his ears. "Were you waiting for me?"

Buster wagged and wiggled.

Behind him, a trail of crumbs led directly to the backpack - where one white paw now emerged, a smushed granola bar impaled on its claws.

Everyone paused.

Then Buster sat at the snack-bringer's feet, eyes wide with innocent sorrow as if to say, "I tried to stop him! I'm a good boy!"



The fib earned him more scratch.

Then, the snack bringer said, "Oh Artemis!" and walked over to extract the unfortunate feline from his lair and banish him to the basement. "What did you get yourself into?"

"A deal with the devil, I'd say," muttered Luna, just loud enough for Buster to hear.

"We all make our own choices," Buster sneezed, trotting into the kitchen to claim his good boy cookie.