

Favor Johnson: A Christmas Story

Willem Lange

Bert Dodson, Illustrator

Bunker Hill Publishing (September 2009)

Hardcover \$16.95 (32pp)

978-1-59373-082-6

The story opens with a man in a red-checked coat delivering, door-to-door, dozens of homemade fruitcakes. He bakes them at home inside tin cans, “for two people, it was a soup can. For small families, a vegetable can. For large families, a tomato can.” Then we get the background. The man’s name is Favor Johnson and he lives on a farm that used to be quite large, but isn’t anymore. Favor is poor and lives alone. Well, not completely alone. He has some cows, chickens, an old horse, a lot of cats, and a dog named Hercules. One night, on Christmas Eve, actually, Hercules goes missing. Favor searches high and low and finds that his companion has been seriously injured. For the first time, Favor finds himself in the position of, while not exactly asking for help, at least accepting it. It changes his life—it changes everyone’s lives. Dodson’s delicate and explicit illustrations are the perfect foil to this unsentimental but completely heartwarming tale. Children of all ages will enjoy the story, and adult readers will laugh out loud at the expressive joke on fruitcake. For all ages.

HEATHER SHAW (September / October 2009)

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