

# **Rolo and the Legend of Jack Bones**

Literary Analysis by Hans Ness

## **Premise**

What if dogs were pirates? This premise is unique enough to be considered “high concept”.

In the prior book, *Planet of the Cats*, genetically advanced cats rule the world. That might appeal to cat lovers, so I wanted a book for dog lovers. I played on the trope of cats versus dogs, where the cats banished the dogs, forcing them to live as outlaws.

## **Story Concept**

The plot picks up a couple of months after the prior book ends. Rolo now has a routine home life. This book shares common traits with the prior two books in the series:

- **A Hero’s Journey:** Rolo finds his way through a new world.
- **Two Protagonists:** Rolo is the primary protagonist in all books, and they all have a girl who is the second protagonist, this time a 16-year-old dog.
- **Antagonist POV:** Like the other books, there are several chapters from the antagonist’s perspective.
- **Comedy + Drama:** All books in the series have absurd humor and serious character drama.

Each book in the series has mostly new characters. In the 1st book, Rolo leaves everyone behind to find Earth, where he meets a new cast. His family from the 2nd book is present in a few chapters in this 3rd book, but he is quickly separated from them and meets a new cast.

## **Genre**

You might call this Fantasy because it features talking animals—low fantasy because it is our world. But there is a scientific reason for how the animals developed the ability to talk in our future, so it is Science Fiction—soft science fiction for the comic absurdities.

It is somewhere between literary and genre fiction. The world is clearly genre sci-fi/fantasy, and pirate action-adventure. However, like literary fiction, the story is character-driven with complex inner conflicts. It does employ tropes, but less than in genre fiction.

I am a fan of animated family films, so I used a story structure similar to screenplays, and I thought much about visuals to give it a cinematic quality.

## **Setting**

This continues on Earth in 2409. New and old technologies are mixed to give it an anachronistic feel, like steampunk. The genetic engineering, flying vehicles, and space travel are highly advanced; the radios, satellites, internet, and tablets are like today's technology; and the sailing ships and dirigibles feel historic. There are no robots or laser weapons typical of sci-fi.

## **Subverting Tropes**

This leans into the tropes of pirate adventures, including the dialects, costumes, swords, the age of sail, plundering, whale hunting, the Royal Navy, and mythical sea monsters and stories.

But soon it subverts this trope. Many characters don't want to be pirates. They were forced to commit piracy for survival, not for profit and greed.

*Spoilers Ahead!*

## Characters

*Rolo* — Human boy, age 13. Protagonist. He's comfortable around other animals and with Ailey one-on-one. He asks personal questions, which gets others to open up. But he feels insecure in groups of human kids. He assumes they don't like him, so he withdraws.

*Jojo Bones* — Blonde Saluki dog, female, age 16. Protagonist. Frustrated because she doesn't want to be a pirate, and she's forming her identity. She wants to live in peace in society, but she has no control. She often argues with her adoptive father, Jack Bones, about politics and everything. She's an idealist and environmentalist, but he's old and conservative. As an orphan, she naively thinks her "real" father, Drake McGnaw, would be a better parent. (Houndrels age at the same rate as humans, so she is a teen. Usually, middle-grade protagonists are 8-13 years old, so readers identify with them as peers. But since Jojo is not human and not in school, I feel her age is less important. Age 16 makes more sense for her to take over as leader. Her family arguments are universal for ages 8-18.)

*Jack Bones* — Wolfhound, male, old. Pivotal supporting character. Initially, he's an intimidating antagonist to both Rolo and Jojo. But soon, we see his loving but complicated relationship with Jojo as her adoptive father, and over time, he comes to respect Rolo. He is bigoted against cats and humans, and stubborn, which leads to his own downfall as a tragic hero. He is forced to make difficult decisions and sacrifices for the greater good, which is selfless, but also burdens him with guilt. His contrasting eyes are symbolic: one ice-blue eye for his cold exterior, one warm brown eye for his loving loyalty. (Jack is historically a common nickname for sailors, including real and fictional pirates: Calico Jack, Jack Ward, Jack Sparrow. Bones are an emblem of dogs, and related to the pirate skull and crossbones.)

*Scuddly* — Octopus, female. Non-speaking comic sidekick. She perches on Jack Bones' shoulder like a pirate's parrot. She also swordfights and plays music. Everyone thinks she's a mini-kraken. For unknown reasons, she forces Rolo to stay on the ship, which enables the story, like a mini *deus ex machina*, but to start a conflict, not resolve one. She bonds with Rolo.

*Commodore Caterwaul* — Havana cat, male, old, posh British accent. Antagonist, static. Rigid, bigoted against dogs, pro-war. Lies to high command to do what he believes is right. Neat freak, vain. (While books 1 & 2 had comic antagonists who were easily fooled, Caterwaul is a serious threat; I added Mr. & Mrs. Furnegie to take that comic role.)

*Lt. Toe Beans* — Silver tabby, male, mid 20's, British accent. Minion to the commodore, initially just a plot device to ask the commodore questions. Eventually becomes an ally and betrays the commodore.

*Drake McGnaw* — Black Saluki, male, old, Irish accent. Antagonist, redeemable. Jojo's biological father, but not a good father. Fierce, risky war hero. Imprisoned for 13 years. Resents Jack Bones and mutinies against him. (His name is based on Francis Drake plus Darby McGraw from *Treasure Island*, with "gnaw" as a dog pun.)

*Queen Mollybelle IX* — Persian cat, middle-aged, posh British accent. Firm leader. Stiff and affected, but ultimately empathetic and understanding.

*Mr. & Mrs. Furnegie* — Mink couple, Trans-Atlantic accent. Comic relief. Wealthy tourists, out of touch, gullible. Their attempts to praise the dogs are classist, backhanded compliments. (Like Mr. & Mrs. Howell from *Gilligan's Island*. The name Furnegie is a spoof of Carnegie.)

Rolo's family:

*Ailey* — Human girl, age 11. Rolo's adoptive sister. Feisty, bold, humorous, protective of Rolo.

*Scram* — Calico cat, male, Scottish accent. Rolo's adoptive father. He has an easy, supportive, joking relationship with Rolo, in contrast to the tension between Jojo and Jack.

*Madame Marvelli* — Elephant, unplaceable accent. Rolo's adoptive mother. Fortune teller, circus owner.

*Quiggles* — Alien creature, male. Rolo's pet. (He was the non-speaking comic sidekick in books 1 & 2. But I wanted a new comic sidekick, so I added Scuddly, limiting Quiggles to only a few chapters.)

Houndrels:

*Fifi the Furry Fury* — White poodle, female, old, French accent, captain. Eager to please and moderate conflicts. Motherly toward Jojo.

*Yellow Beard* — Chihuahua, male, old, Spanish accent, captain. Long-time friend of Jack. (Name is a spoof of Black Beard.)

*Scurvy Dog* — Bull Terrier, male, old, Dutch accent, captain. Firm leader, fiercely protective.

*Fleabit Bill* — Newfoundland, male, old, pirate accent, captain. Quiet and easygoing, asks good questions.

*Yoho & Sploot* — Pug male & Spaniel female, pirate crew, Boston accents. They exploit the naivety of the Furnegies, conning them for tips.

*Master Boopnose* — Komondor sheepdog, male, quartermaster. One of the first dogs to accept Rolo.

*Mr. Starbark* — Schnauzer, male, crew, New England accent. Slow to accept Rolo. (Named after Mr. Starbuck from *Moby Dick*, who was named after the historic Starbuck whaling family of Nantucket.)

*Tri-Pawed* — Basset Hound, male, crew. Missing one leg. Respected colorful storyteller.

*Sadie* — Yorkshire Terrier, female, teen. Jojo's friend. Lives on island. Skilled with technology. Bubbly.

*Itchy Beard* — Chihuahua, male, puppy of Yellow Beard. Joins circus. Siblings *Scratchy*, *Shaggy*, and *Scruffy Beard*.

*Silky Beard* — Chihuahua, female, old. Wife of Yellow Beard.

*Bonny the Biter* — Saluki, female. Jojo's mother. Died when Jojo was 4.

Other pirates: *Wormheart*, *Poocheeboots*, *Old Yipper*, *Zoomie*, *Fetcher*

Other Cats:

*Mrs. Floofer* — Orange tabby, middle-aged, Philadelphia accent. Rolo's teacher.

*Mr. Chonkers* — Black longhair cat, fat, Georgia accent. Museum guide.

*Prison Guards* — cats

Human Classmates:

*Gabrigail & Penelica* — Snobby girls

*Joshathan* — boy, friendly toward Rolo

*Benjony* — boy, dumb, class clown

Others: *Stephica*, *Melifer*, *Brictoria*, *Winolabeth*, *Mallison*, *Ellifer*, *Audrathy*, *Stephifer*, *Samanthanie*, *Debbrathy*, *Elizanie*; *Georgodore*, *Arthurpher*, *Jathan*, *Stevide*, *Elijamin*, *Nathander*

## **Protagonists**

Rolo is the main protagonist. He is powerless and passive until he chooses to stay and help the dogs pursue peace. His personal questions help bring together Jojo and Jack. But he misunderstands his peers until his sister, Ailey, steps in to save him. Initially, he thinks pirate life is a fun adventure, then he matures to understand the dogs' hardship. But he is mostly a static character.

Jojo is the second protagonist. She has little power, and she fails in all her attempts to persuade Jack Bones and the council. When Jack finally believes in her and gives her power, that is when she steers the plot. She initially has a simplistic, over-idealistic view of the world, and she resents Jack, but she matures to understand the complexities and compromises in life.

## **Goals & Conflicts**

Rolo's external goal is first to get home, but he's conflicted because he also wants adventure. Later, he changes his goal to stay and help Jojo. His internal goals are to do something meaningful and fit in with his classmates.

Jojo's external goal is to end the war. Her internal conflict is that she doesn't know who she is yet. She wants to form a connection with her "real" father.

It's universal for kids to struggle with fitting in. I didn't want the usual trope of overcoming a bully. I liked the idea of Rolo unknowingly causing his own problems; the only reason peers don't connect with him is because he assumes they won't, so he acts distant. This is based on a student I had who was naturally nerdy, but he also made naive choices that kept peers away. It's also based on my cat: The neighbor cats just want to be friends, but my cat always acts defensive, which escalates into fighting.

## **Plot**

Rolo's plot is the *Hero's Journey*. He feels a calling to adventure, then he gets pulled into this unknown world at sea. Jojo orients him. He helps the dogs reach peace. Then he returns home with more confidence.

The war plot is an unstoppable wreck. Every decision made by Jack Bones, the Houndrel Council, and Drake McGnaw makes things worse, and Jojo is unable to stop them. They are losing the battle, then the volcano erupts, destroying half their ships and killing their leader. Only from these ashes can Jojo rise and lead the dogs to peace. Rolo's video was the catalyst to motivate Lt. Toe Beans to expose Commodore Caterwaul and persuade the queen.

## **Tragedy**

Jack Bones is a tragic hero, borrowing story elements from tragedies. The word "legend" in the title subtly hints that Jack Bones will die, and the first chapter explicitly foretells that a legend will die. Like Faust, Jack had made a bargain with the "devil cats" when he betrayed Drake to save his crew, but that later led to Drake's mutiny, which ultimately led to Jack's death. Caterwaul says, "You cannot outrun your fate, Jack." But Jack's fate was sealed only by his own fatal flaw of stubbornness and hatred of catlings. He failed to change until it was too late. His death is entirely avoidable and unnecessary, which makes it more tragic.

## **Uncommon Practices**

Compared to the first two books, this book has *relatively* cloudier goals, passive protagonists, and indirect resolutions. Jojo did not end the war; it ended due to bad luck. Only after Jack handed her power was she able to negotiate peace. Rolo did not resolve his problem with his peers; it was Ailey who cleared up the misunderstanding for him. I attempted to make it more conventional to genre stories, but it felt forced, so I embraced it as is. In this sense, the story is more like a literary drama, where cloudy conflicts, passive characters, and indirect resolutions are not uncommon. The characters find their way through the mess of life in a way that is still satisfying.

## Point of View

The narrator is *limited omniscient*, alternating between Rolo's and Jojo's perspectives. It is also an objective narrator for the commodore, and also in chapters that are mostly action. The narrator is personified as a dog, passing judgment and addressing the reader directly. They know the reader is a human. The characters' inner thoughts and the narrator's voice sometimes merge in *free indirect speech*.

## Tone

The tone spans a wide range—from broad, absurd comedy—to wry, witty humor—to lyrical prose—to heavy, intense arguments. *Comic relief* is used often, and scenes often contrast in tone to emphasize important changes.

## Themes & Motifs

*War and Peace* — The war against cats has been going on for 48 years, with no way to win. They achieve peace only after they are defeated.

*Young vs Old* — Jack Bones and all the captains are old and stuck in their ways, perpetuating the war. Jojo is a teenager, born long after the war started. She and the younger characters achieve peace. The older generation is more traditional, and like in many families, Jojo's progressive views conflict with Jack's conservative views. The volcano is like global warming: the young are trying to deal with it while the old ignore it. Young readers may identify with the young characters, frustrated with the old politicians and leaders.

*Misunderstanding* — The cats and dogs misunderstand each other. Jojo misunderstands Rolo since she has never met a human before, and Jack Bones doesn't trust humans. Rolo misunderstands his peers and assumes the worst. The inter-species bigotry may be read as an allegory for racism.

*Sacrifices* — Jack Bones had to make difficult decisions and sacrifices in war and parenthood, where he had to choose the least worst option. Jojo's youthful idealism prevents her from understanding this at first.

*Outsiders, Fitting In* — Since Rolo grew up off-world, he is like a foreigner who doesn't fit in with his classmates. Jojo doesn't fit in with the crew and the older dogs. The dogs are banished from society, outcasts.

*Rich vs Poor* — The houndrels are impoverished from banishment. The wealthy minklings are a comedic foil, making backhanded compliments that satirize classism and racism.

*Storytelling* — In sailor tradition, the pirates tell tall tales, and Rolo joins in.

## Symbolism

When the Dog Star appears in chapter 18, as a binary star, it symbolizes the new friendship of Jojo and Rolo. When it fades in chapter 36, it represents the death of Jack Bones and the defeat of the houndrel spirit.

## Humor

*Role Reversal* — Dogs treating humans like dogs

*Dog Humor* — Though genetically advanced with human-like intelligence, dogs still have dog behaviors: chewing bones, fetching balls, chasing their tails, lapping drinks with their tongues, etc.

*Cat Humor* — The genetically advanced cats still give dead birds as gifts and eat mice. The commodore grooms himself fastidiously.

*Ship Names* — Cat navy ships: *HMS Finicky*, *Irresolute*, *Indifference*, *Ambivalence*. Dog pirate ships: the *Mangy Cur*, *Bellyrubber*, *Empty Bowl*, *Pug's Revenge* (based on *Queen Anne's Revenge*), *Dancing Dachshund*, *Flying Doberman* (based on *Flying Dutchman*).

*Word Play* — Pirate-Dog puns: Jolly Wagger (Jolly Roger), Scurvy Dog, Doggy Jones' Locker (Davey Jones), Captain Blackbark (Black Bart), Captain Hooktail, etc. Cat placenames: Catlantic Ocean, Catibbean Sea, Meowmi, Bermewda, Purrito Rico, Ticks and Calicos Islands, etc. Dog placenames: Hounduras, Barkbados, Mt. Cerberus, Hair of the Dog Inn, etc. Animal social media: MewTube, SnapCat, TickTalk, Whiskagram, CatsApp, etc.

## Dog Culture

Houndrels (dogs) are banished from land, so they live on the sea, impoverished, with limited resources. They adopted the culture of sailors, pirates, and whalers, including music, storytelling, and mythical sea creatures.

Because we characterize dogs as loyal, dog culture values loyalty. And because we associate bones with dogs, bones have significance in dog culture. Carved bones are used for spiritual connection with the deceased, symbols of leadership, symbols of pirates, and jewelry.

Dogs often refer to cats as devils and demons, like our own human history, associating cats with the devil and witchcraft.

Dogs hate cat puns. But they love dog puns and don't see the irony.

## Cat Culture

Catlings (cats) are the ruling class, where only cats can be royalty, and cats control international law. All other animals have their own countries and local control, except humans, who have no country, and dogs, who are banished from land.

Cats run the human school. It is not stated if humans are prohibited from teaching, or if there aren't enough humans. Schools for other animals are not mentioned.

Cats love puns.

## Animal Clothing

Talking animal stories are usually fantasy—a universe where animals always talked. There are two categories of character art:

*Anthropomorphic*: Animals walk upright with humanoid bodies. They may be fully clothed (*Zootopia*), unclothed (*Bugs Bunny*), or partially (*Puss in Boots*).

*Anatomical*: Animals walk on all fours with natural bodies, unclothed (*Bolt*, *Secret Life of Pets*). This is most common in worlds where humans do exist.

Some stories mix both styles (trope “Four Legs Good, Two Legs Better”), especially in worlds without humans. Pumba walks on four legs, while Timon walks on two in *The Lion King*. Likewise: Bagheera vs Balloo in *The Jungle Book*; Zebra and Giraffe vs Lion and Hippo in *Madagascar*.

My story is science fiction—in our universe, where real animals were genetically modified. They still have anatomical animal bodies, but with adaptations to walk on two legs if they want. (Search for videos of real apes and dogs walking on two legs.) They adopted traditions of human civilization, including clothing. This combination of animal bodies wearing clothes is extremely rare. The clothes are adapted for realism—e.g., dresses don't make sense on an animal that walks horizontally but sits upright, so they might wear a jumpsuit with draping that resembles a dress.

## Animal Sizes

Each animal is genetically engineered at a different scale, not proportional to nature. Size generally corresponds to how much power they hold in society. Cats rule the world, so they are 6-7 feet tall, bigger than hoomans (especially their heads). Most dog breeds are smaller than cats, but large breeds may be taller. As an Irish wolfhound, Jack Bones is about 7'8”, reflecting his importance.

## **Timeline**

Day 1: Rolo goes on field trip, stranded on ship, meets Jack Bones.

Day 2: Gets to know Jojo and Scuddly, sees whale hunt.

Day 3: Scallywag Isle, Houndrel Council meets, Commodore confronts Jack.

Day 4: Prison Break, Jojo meets Drake.

Day 5: Volcano island.

Day 6: Rolo and Jojo make video, sea battle, volcano erupts.

Day 7: Jack dies, dogs captured, Queen intervenes.

Day 8: Funeral.

Day 9: Rolo returns to school.

## **Literary Comparison**

*Treasure Island* — Jack Bones is similar to Long John Silver, a pirate captain who is initially antagonistic to Jim (Rolo), but they come to respect each other.

The cats' oppression of dogs is similar to any books about racial/ethnic/religious persecution.

As Rolo spends time with the dogs and learns about their oppression, he decides to help them rebel. A similar trope occurs in *Star Wars* (Han Solo, Jyn Erso, Cassian Andor), *Avatar*, *Johnny Tremain*, and *Dune*.

## **Chapter 1. Heartworms**

It appears to be a couple months since the prior book. Rolo has a loving family in a weird world of giant, genetically engineered talking animals. Life is good, aside from three internal conflicts: anxiety about making friends, longing for adventure, and ambition to do something important. The tone is humorous, and the narrator is revealed to be an unnamed houndrel. The narrator foreshadows to build anticipation.

## **Chapter 2. The Field Trip**

More world-building explains the bio-technology. We see Rolo's anxiety around peers. The humor is piled on, setting up a standing joke about cat puns. The sight of the *Jolly Waggoner* is Rolo's call to adventure.

## **Chapter 3. The Jolly Waggoner**

The museum guide is a handy narrative device for mounds of world-building with plenty of humor. While half of what he says is true, half are setups to be subverted later—misinformation about houndrels being uncivilized and pirates not being real. The titular character, Jack Bones, is introduced and hinted at for the next several chapters before we formally meet him in chapter 8.

## **Chapter 4. Lost to History**

Rolo explores the *Jolly Waggoner*. The ship is like another character, often described with personification. The call to adventure grows louder. Again, he shows anxiety around peers. The triggering event is when Scuddly the octopus holds Rolo captive as the ship is stolen (14% into the story). In addition to Rolo's three internal conflicts, he now has an external conflict: to get home.

## **Chapter 5. Commandeered**

The chapter contains multiple intriguing curiosities: The octopus that trapped Rolo now helps him hide. Rolo sees only glimpses of the mysterious houndrels from his hiding spot. The ship is also a submarine. The pirates seem cruel. This characterization will continue for several chapters before it is subverted. The minks are introduced for comic relief. Tension builds as Rolo has not been found yet.

## **Chapter 6. Commodore Caterwaul**

The POV shifts to the Commodore Caterwaul, who is shrewd, relentless, and a neat-freak—a comic flaw. Lt. Toe Bean is a narrative device, the new guy to ask questions for world-building and to reveal Caterwaul's strategy. Since the pirates have been presented as brutish, Caterwaul might be the hero to rescue Rolo. But most readers will perceive Caterwaul as the antagonist, for several reasons: it's expected in pirate stories; Caterwaul is stiff, unlikable, and condescending; his name is unpleasant, not heroic; and their secret mission and deception seem morally gray at best.

### **Chapter 7. The Stowaway**

The POV shifts to the second main character, Jojo. Her inner conflict is that she wants more than a life at sea. When the pirates discover Rolo, they seem extremely dangerous, but it is ambiguous since their threats are humorously absurd. Jojo is the clear ally. When they mention “the captain,” we might correctly guess this is Jack Bones.

### **Chapter 8. The Captain**

The pirates are still presented as wild and dangerous. Finally, we meet the titular character, Captain Jack Bones—old, intimidating, uncaring, stubborn, bigoted, and distrusting, but not cruel, since he plans to release Rolo unharmed. Jojo is still an ally. There is strong tension between Jack and Jojo.

### **Chapter 9. The Cuddly Kraken**

The ambiguous frenemy Scuddly becomes a likable friend. Jojo defies the captain and frees Rolo. Since she has not met a hooman before, and he has not met houndrels before, they have comic misunderstandings, and much to learn.

### **Chapter 10. Thar She Blows**

Elements of whale hunting are combined with pirate raids. Rolo is enthralled by the pirate action, but disappointed that it’s not as violent as he imagined pirates—the first clue that houndrels are not so brutish. The minks interrupt the action for comedy.

### **Chapter 11. Caterwaul Tracking**

We see Jack and Caterwaul are both clever, evenly matched in this game of hide and seek. Caterwaul’s motivation is a rivalry against Jack and a resentment toward his Navy superiors, hinting at his rogue operation.

### **Chapter 12. To Bite the Hand**

Jack and Jojo’s unclear relationship is revealed to be father and daughter, combative, but with love. Their arguments about the volcano, war, cats, and hoomans are like fights about global warming, politics, and racism, forming a theme of young idealism versus old conservatism. We see the pirates are just trying to survive, strategic, not selfish. We root for them because they’re underdogs, rebels against an empire. Jack’s tremors and age suggest he will die, but the optimistic reader will hope he finds a cure.

### **Chapter 13. The Crow’s Nest**

Although the other houndrels have not been friendly to Rolo, he has a childish fascination with pirate life. Jojo subverts the pirate fantasy, since they’re forced to plunder for survival, not for greed. Her unknown past and the death of her mother are introduced as a mysterious secret to be revealed.

### **Chapter 14. Tall Tales**

The tale is purely an entertaining interlude, common for historic sailors and pirates. Rolo plays into the houndrels' bigotry against cats. They accept him into the group, now firmly establishing the houndrels as the good guys.

### **Chapter 15. Scallywag Isle**

Scallywag Isle is a surprise twist—not an island, but a resourceful solution to their banishment, which is elaborated with more world-building. Jojo and Jack fight again, young against old. Jack is the only houndrel on board who has not warmed up to Rolo. The minks reappear for comedy.

### **Chapter 16. The Houndrel Council**

The houndrels plot two upcoming events: a prison break and a battle against the Navy. Drake McGnaw is introduced as a mysterious part of Jojo's past.

### **Chapter 17. Caterwaul Approaching**

Caterwaul demonstrates more strategy. His plan is clearly based on bigotry and propaganda.

### **Chapter 18. Sirius Rising**

Jojo and Rolo bond further. Jojo's internal conflict is that she doesn't know who she is, especially since her past has been kept secret from her.

### **Chapter 19. The Hair of the Dog Inn**

We see the joyous side of houndrels as they drink, tell jokes, and sing. The minks reappear for more comedy.

### **Chapter 20. Caterwaul Confronts**

Caterwaul confronts Jack, building tension and expectations for a battle later.

### **Chapter 21. The Way Home**

Rolo feels very conflicted, as his internal desire for adventure outweighs his external need to get home.

### **Chapter 22. Who is Drake McGnaw**

The mystery of Jojo's past deepens. Making difficult choices becomes an ongoing theme. Their power struggle shows Jack's authority is no match for his daughter's fierce independence. The scene ends in comic relief.

### **Chapter 23. The Tale of Doggy Jones**

The colorful stories are another interlude, purely for entertainment. The minks bring comedy, humorously jabbing the wealthy elite.

### **Chapter 24. Ticks and Calicos**

Rolo wants to join the mission, still childishly romanticizing pirates. The crew pushes Jack to accept Rolo. Anticipation builds for Jojo meeting her birth father, Drake, and a potential fallout with Jack.

### **Chapter 25. Breakout**

This breakout trope leans into action, humor, and clever technology.

### **Chapter 26. Unfamilial**

Jojo's hopes to connect with her birth father are shot down. Additionally, Drake casts blame on Jack, so she may lose connection with her adoptive father too.

### **Chapter 27. Caterwaul Pursues**

The constant chase keeps up the tension. Caterwaul's secrecy again seems suspicious.

### **Chapter 28. Dog Bed Cove**

Jack now accepts Rolo. The krakens add a feeling of mythology, and the mystery of the volcanic village is revealed. We see another warm side of the houndrels, now with their families. The minks deliver more comedy.

### **Chapter 29. Hot Lava**

Anticipation builds for the upcoming battle. The volcanic activity raises the stakes and adds time pressure. Jojo hits a low with all the stresses. When Rolo acts childish again, Jojo and Rolo have a falling out—a common trope as they sink toward the darkest hour.

### **Chapter 30. Dinner with Dogs**

Tension builds as Drake challenges Jack with tough questions, and indirectly accuses him of being a traitor. Jack and Rolo bond. Jack shows his vulnerability, the opposite of his initial fierce persona. Rolo challenges Jack about his bigotry against cats.

### **Chapter 31. Caterwaul Closing In**

Toe Beans proves himself valuable to Caterwaul, but he also secretly doubts Caterwaul's honesty, growing from a mere literary device to a pivotal character.

### **Chapter 32. Change of Plans**

Rolo and Jojo make amends. He takes a more mature view of the pirates' struggle, and he commits himself to helping them, prioritizing his internal goal of doing something important over his external goal of going home.

### **Chapter 33. Imminent Danger**

The tension jumps when Caterwaul's ship arrives, foiling their planned attack. Jack and Drake collaborate on a new plan. Jojo's conflict with Jack and Drake hits a new low. The tension jumps even higher as the volcano is about to erupt.

### **Chapter 34. Battle of the Catibbean**

In the moment of truth, Jack finally reverses, agreeing with Jojo and putting the safety of the houndrels first. Drake's mutiny prioritizes victory over safety, fueled by a personal grudge against Jack. It's unclear if Drake knowingly risked Jojo's life. Jack deserts the battle to save Jojo, fearful she might drown (like her mother did), fully committed to her. The battle shows the houndrels could have won with all six ships, had it not been for the eruption.

### **Chapter 35. Ash Fall**

It is the darkest hour. Jojo did not need Jack's help in the water, so his sacrifice to save her was unnecessary, which makes it even more tragic. But it serves to mark a clear transition as he passes the crown. His deathbed confession finally reveals the secret of Jojo's past. Every decision he made was for the greater good, but the unavoidable sacrifices weighed on his guilt—betraying her father and letting her mother die. He acknowledges Jojo in every way, encouraging her.

### **Chapter 36. Jojo's Story**

Rolo's video was to tell the simple truth, to cut through all the propaganda, bigotry, and misunderstanding. The timing coincides with Jack's passing in the night. At the end of the chapter, the figurative language paints the world as if it died with Jack—the sea, the island, the sky, and the Dog Star.

### **Chapter 37. The Wake of War**

Fifi gives Jojo the final affirmation she needs to accept the crown. The darkest hour turns even darker when Caterwaul arrives, administering his cruelty. The krakens add a mythical gravitas. "Wake" has a double-meaning: trailing wave and death ritual.

### **Chapter 38. Queen Mollybelle IX**

The Queen's arrival brings comic relief after five very tense and sad chapters. It is unclear why she is there, adding intrigue. She is played as an antagonist, but in a surprise twist, she is revealed as an ally, as is Lt. Toe Beans. Multiple victories come rapidly: the video was apparently a critical catalyst, to Rolo's credit; justice is swiftly served, with Caterwaul defeated; and the houndrels get a happy resolution. After a long absence, the minks reappear, closing the chapter with over-the-top comic relief.

### **Chapter 39. Sunset**

The funeral brings closure. Lt. Toe Beans now has more depth. While Jojo initially mocked Rolo in a pirate hat, she turns around and gives him the greatest pirate hat of all, knowing he truly understands it is not just a costume. Jojo's closure with Drake handles very complex issues: He has plenty of flaws to be a villain, and yet she sets a very ambitious goal to forgive him. The forgiveness from both the Queen and Jojo is precisely what is needed to keep the peace after a hostile war. Jack is eulogized without acknowledging his flaws. Jojo's speech shows her maturity beyond a teenager who doesn't understand why parents sometimes make what seems like the wrong choice. Her final line, "I'm sorry I wasn't a better daughter," shows she still has unresolved guilt. The last phrase of the chapter, "the eternal embrace of the sea," is a callback to Bonny drowning, suggesting Jack has joined her in the afterlife.

### **Epilogue**

The epilogue adds comic relief and ties up loose ends. Ailey getting a dog is a callback to the first chapter. Details are added to show the houndrels flourishing happily ever after. Drake begins his redemption arc, and Jojo shows growth since she now knows who she is, not just someone's daughter. Rolo is now home, his external goal, and he achieved two of his internal goals: adventure and doing something important. Now, with Ailey's help, he resolves the third conflict by making friends. He was falsely externalizing his conflict with peers, when the solution was within him the whole time, which ties in with the theme of misunderstanding.