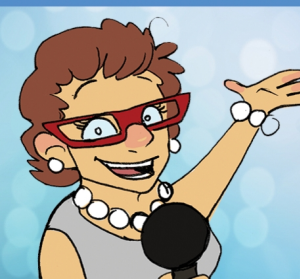


# LORRAINE BOWEN

# The CRUMBLE Lady

ILLUSTRATED BY  
**BASIL M  
WAITE**



**The  
CRUMBLE  
Lady**

LORRAINE BOWEN

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*'My golden girl Lorraine Bowen's talents are endless.  
Making crumble, singing about crumble, and now  
writing a book about crumble. It's sure to become a  
literary classic that will go down in history as one of  
the greatest books concerning crumble ever written'.*

**David Walliams**

# THE CAT FOOD CRUMBLE

The Crumble Lady was twiddling her thumbs when there came a knock at the door! A face appeared at the window. It was Pearl from over the road.

The Crumble Lady smiled. 'I can't get up,' she said. 'I've strained my leg.'

The Crumble Lady had been dancing <sup>wildly</sup> with her friends at a party. She had, of course, been showing off! **AND NOW SHE WAS PAYING FOR IT!**

She had been to the doctors and he had given the Crumble Lady strict instructions to rest her leg and to do nothing.

To do nothing? What a to-do – to do nothing!

OH DEAR!

And it was lovely and sunny outside!

Boiling hot, sunny, summer, weather.

There wasn't even much to look at out of the window, since most people were either out or down at the beach.

**'CATCH!'**

The Crumble Lady launched her keys through the front window so Pearl could let herself in. Pearl held a cat in her arms. *IT WAS PURRING LOUDLY.*

'I'm off on holiday. Can you please look after Jack while I'm away?' Pearl asked, pointing at her vibrating moggy. 'Normally he's OK. He's got a cat-food-flap and he's good with a tin-opener.'

The Crumble Lady smiled insincerely. *My friend is nutty as a fruitcake*, she thought.

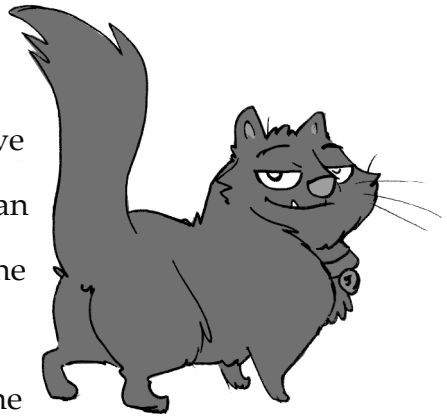
'But with so many cats going missing,' Pearl continued, 'I would like some peace of mind.'

It was true. Everyone was complaining about their missing cats. There were notices up on every lamppost – **MISSING CAT** – by the names of Freddie,

Suki, Randolph, Porky, Sammy and even... Apple Crumble. **WHAT A GREAT NAME FOR CAT!** And what it would be like calling it in at the end of the day?

'So I'm obviously keen for old Jack not to go missing too,' Pearl said.

The Crumble Lady agreed to keep an eye on Pearl's cat. She didn't have much else to do, other than watch TV and stare out the window.



After Pearl had left, the Crumble Lady looked at her new strange friend as he circled the living room, his tail held high.

*I'll open the window and let him out for a bit,* she thought. *There's no one around at the moment.* 'Off you go,' she said with a wave of her hand.

\*

Later, after the Crumble Lady had hopped to the kitchen to make herself some lunch, she sat down to watch Jack the cat through the window. After all, she did say she'd keep an eye on him.

Jack was doing what cats normally do: chewing a bit of grass, getting rid of his fleas, sniffing a part of a wall, looking out for other cats to hiss at, running a bit down the pavement and leaping up onto a window ledge.

*Wow, the Crumble Lady thought. Jack makes leaping up on that window ledge look so easy!* She tapped on the window to get his attention, but he just darted away.

Now bored, she turned on the TV.

'This is the news,' the newsreader announced in a boring voice. 'One hundred cats have gone missing. The police are said to be looking for the purr-petrator. Our reporter has the details.'

The Crumble Lady watched the reporter conduct



interviews with the missing cat owners. Some were old. Some were young. Some were posh. Some were not so posh. One man was sporting a 'Find My Tiddles' t-shirt over his enormous belly.

The Crumble Lady sighed as the reporter handed back to the newsreader, who still looked quite bored.

**MISSING CATS!** She would need to be extra cautious with Jack then.

The next item was about the spate of burglaries in the area.

The newsreader said, 'The police are baffled how the burglars are obtaining entry. Their advice is to keep doors and windows shut during this hot spell.'

The Crumble Lady sighed again.

And what with lunch, the sun coming through the window and the boring voice of the newsreader, the Crumble Lady fell asleep.

***Zzzz... zzzz... zzzz.***

The screechy sound of a police siren made its

way up the street and woke up the Crumble Lady from her nap. She picked up a purring Jack from the floor and hobbled outside to see what was going on.

A young girl was sobbing and the police were trying to comfort her.

‘Waaah! My jewels. My lovely jewels. Who’s stolen my jewels?’

The Crumble Lady, holding Jack the cat, was spotted by one of the police officers, who came up the steps to the house with his notebook.



‘Have you seen anyone around here this afternoon, ma’am?’ the policeman asked.

‘No, I’ve been asleep with the cat,’ she replied.

‘There’s been a burglary at number seven. The young lady’s bracelets have been pinched.’

He took some more details.

\*

After her afternoon nap the next day, the Crumble Lady discovered the same thing had happened two streets away. And the next day too; this time it was only one street away!

Let's stop for a minute!

This is a mystery. What do we have here? Let's look at the facts...

Street by street.

No strangers around.

Missing cats.

During her afternoon nap.

Yes. It's quite a mystery!

Perked up by the mysterious goings-on, the Crumble Lady decided to hobble into the kitchen and make a crumble.

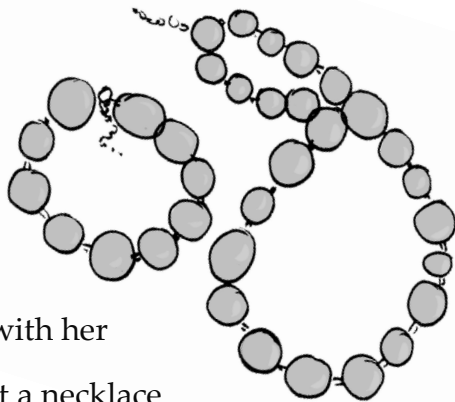
Making a crumble is such a lovely thing to do

when you've got a lot on your mind. It's easy to make, and while you do something easy, it normally sorts out problems, mysteries and things that are plainly weird.

'Jack, it's a shame you don't like crumble.' She patted him, then washed her hands.

Flour, butter. Rub together, add the sugar, cut up some apples. **FIND A DISH... FIND A DISH...**

The Crumble Lady leaned down to find a dish and saw something sparkling at the bottom of the cupboard.



**WOW!**

She felt around with her hand and pulled out a necklace.

She felt around again and pulled out a bracelet.

'Un oh! There's a stash of jewels here! Oh no, I must be the jewel thief. I don't know what to do.'

What would you do if you found bracelets and jewels in your crumble dish?

Would you:

- a) *Ask around and find out where they came from?*
- b) *Wear them out and about?*
- c) *Investigate the mystery of the missing jewels?*
- d) *Give them as a present?*
- e) *Sell them for pocket money?*

Well the Crumble Lady decided to go for option C. She couldn't walk down the street and wear them – they didn't belong to her. She wasn't a thief, and so the only thing left was to **INVESTIGATE!**

The next day at ten to two in the afternoon (*that's 1.50pm*) she heated up her crumble with a bit of cream, sat in the chair with her leg up on the cushion near the window, listened to the BORING news, and pretended to fall asleep.

She shut her eyes, made a snoring sound, but really she was wide awake.

The Crumble Lady didn't flinch when Jack circled the mat, tail high.

She didn't even flinch when Jack **WHIZZED** out of the open window.

But...

The Crumble Lady **DID** flinch at the sound of an engine coming from down the street. She didn't recognise it (*not that she was an expert on the different sounds engines made!*), but it stopped, then started, then stopped again.

She opened one eye at a time, got hold of her walking stick and peered out of the window, in the sneakiest way she could think of. That is, mostly hidden behind a

curtain. She rubbed her eyes in disbelief. There was a **massive** dog – a beast of a bulldog – guarding



the front of a house and Jack the cat was scrambling up the drainpipe, shooting himself up on a ledge and – **WOW!** – jumping in top cat fashion into an open window!

This happened several times and each time he scrambled down Jack had a stash of beads, bracelets and jewels in his mouth.

**HANG ON A MINUTE!**

Next he brought down an **IPAD!**

The guard dog growled each time Jack emerged, and eventually they both stood at the side of the road waiting.

*Jack the cat is a thief! A burglar,  
Jack the cat is a...*

**...CATBURGLAR!**

‘What on earth am I going to tell Pearl Barley?’



So many questions ran through the Crumble

Lady's mind.

Suddenly a white van (*it was the van engine she must have heard!*) pulled up and a man climbed out. There was something familiar about the man – the Crumble Lady had seen him before.

**BUT WHERE?**

She shook her head to find the information, but nothing fell out.

The man gave the cat and dog some treats, and then whisked the loot (*and the dog*) in the back of the van, with everyone none the wiser (*except for the Crumble Lady, of course!*).

She waited until the van had driven off before moving away from the window.

She had to think **FAST**. She clunked away into the kitchen and spotted her half-eaten crumble in the dish. Delicious as it looked, she had an idea.

She scraped away the fruit from under the crumble topping and replaced it with some cat food.



It was now a **CAT FOOD CRUMBLE!**

And then she phoned Constable Seaweed.

'Hello!' said Constable Seaweed. 'Oh, is that the Crumble Lady with a lovely new crumble to bring around?' He was delighted to get her call – anything to break the drudgery of trying to solve the mystery of the missing jewels.

'Yes, I have got a new crumble idea!' she exclaimed. 'It's cat food crumble.'

'Ugh!' Constable Seaweed said. 'You've put me off puddings for good. You must be joking. There's no such thing as cat food crumble. Yuck!'

'There is now,' the Crumble Lady said, with a hint of delight.

'Well I hope you're not expecting me to eat it.'

'Please come around here tomorrow at ten to two and all will be revealed,' she said, thinking about the pattern of the burglaries. 'Bring a few others too.'

'I hope you are not wasting my precious time,'

Constable Seaweed warned. 'I've got a massive crime to solve and coming around for cat food crumble sounds ridiculous.'

'All will be revealed,' the Crumble Lady said confidently.

She put down the phone, went back to her chair, pretending to be asleep again. Jack the cat nonchalantly crept back through the window and fell asleep on the mat beside her.

So, at 1.45pm (*five minutes early!*) Constable Seaweed and a few of his colleagues arrived at the Crumble Lady's door.

She told them to be quiet and she sneaked them in upstairs, and hid them behind the velvet curtains in the bedroom. They were all quite thin, so were easily hidden, luckily.

For ten minutes the men hardly breathed, waiting and waiting behind the velvet curtains.

Soon a white van appeared in the next street along, which could be seen out of the bedroom window, and the same dog as before trundled out of the van. Jack hurtled out of the kitchen window, jumped the garden fence and, after a few instructions from a chubby van driver, scuttled up the side of number eighty-seven.

Constable Seaweed, viewing from upstairs, couldn't believe his eyes as he watched the cat **WHIZZ** up the drainpipe, dance over the roofs and then come back holding a sparkly watch in his mouth.

Constable Seaweed and his officers scrambled down the stairs, to find the Crumble Lady standing in the kitchen with the cat food crumble in her hands. She was not very fast on her feet and told two of the officers to carry her. They did as they were told. Constable Seaweed led the way across the garden, with the officers running behind him, carrying the Crumble Lady, who held the cat food

crumble in the air. And what a funny sight it was to behold!



‘Chase the van,’ the Crumble Lady ordered.

The van driver *(who was he? She knew him from somewhere!)* noticed the strange pursuers, and quickly started the van.

The van sped down the street really fast, with Constable Seaweed and the policemen, who were still carrying the Crumble Lady, trying to chase it.

It was hard work!

As they ran, the smell of cat food filled the air. Both Jack and the guard dog galloped along.

The cat food crumble was distinctly salmon and sardine flavoured – Jack’s favourite – and the guard dog... well, he’d eat **ANYTHING!** He was always ravenous and the crumble smelt good.

The white van disappeared into a side alley.

The police and the Crumble Lady stopped and hid behind a lamppost. Legs and arms sticking out. It was a thin lamppost, and four people did not really fit behind it!

They watched the van driver open a large shed.

All was quiet, all was still.

The Crumble Lady hopped forward and launched the cat food crumble off the plate, high in the air!

**SPLAAAT!**

It splurged onto the ground.

Like a scene from the Pied Piper, hundreds of cats appeared from a nearby shed. Obviously the smell from the salmon and sardine crumble crashing

on the hot cement was just like a lovely blackberry and apple crumble to a human person.

## IRRESISTIBLE!

Ahh! The van driver looked around him in horror, and was engulfed by a wave of cats. There were white cats, ginger cats, tabbies – all desperate for a bit of the **STINKY** crumble!



‘You’re nicked, Large Eddie!’ Constable Seaweed shouted, clipping the chubby van driver with his handcuffs.

And it was Large Eddie. That’s why the Crumble

Lady recognised him. He had escaped prison earlier in the month; this must have been his latest get-rich-scheme after he'd been foiled before by the Crumble Lady and Constable Seaweed – the dynamic duo of Brighton!

**AND NOW THEY HAD FOILED HIM AGAIN!**

'What's going on?' A flamboyant looking woman popped out of the shed. 'Poo! What's that awful smell? Sardines! I'm allergic to sardines! Ahh! Ahh!'

'Wow!' the Crumble Lady shouted. 'It's her, it's her! She trains cats. She's a cat trainer! I recognise her from the telly. It's the cat lady from **Britain's Got Talent!** She got the golden buzzer.'

Constable Seaweed nodded, and grumbled. 'She didn't deserve it.'

The Crumble Lady agreed. 'I much preferred that space song in the semi-final.'

'Large Eddie, you're in **BIG** trouble,' said Constable Seaweed.

‘It’s not my doing – it’s that evil cat lady over there!’ Eddie pointed at the cat lady, who was still screaming. ‘She captures and trains the cats and hypnotises them to leap up in houses and steal sparkly objects.’

The Cat Lady started to hiss like a cat in a cat fight (*you know the ones you hear late at night in the summer*).

‘HISSSSSS!’ she hissed. ‘Well he drives the van!’

Constable Seaweed grabbed Large Eddie by the arm. ‘She knows the secret word to free all the cats,’ Eddie shouted.

‘I won’t tell you the word! I’ll never tell you!’

The Crumble Lady hopped up to the Cat Lady with a sardine tail between her fingers.

‘Argh, sardines!’ screamed the Cat Lady. ‘Even the smell makes me come out in a rash... argh!’

‘Yummy,’ the Crumble Lady said, bringing her hand closer to the Cat Lady. ‘Would you like some?’

‘No, no, keep it away from me!’



‘What’s that? I can’t quite hear you.’

‘OK, OK. I’ll tell you. It’s... it’s... it’s... The secret word is...’

**THERE WAS A PAUSE.**

‘The secret word is...’

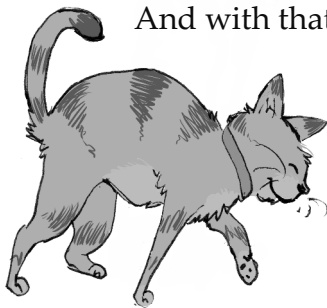
**ANOTHER PAUSE.**

Everybody looked at each other. It was just like a **Britain’s Got Talent** final.

‘Golden Buzzer,’ said the Cat Lady with a deep sigh of defeat.

‘Golden Buzzer!’ the Crumble Lady repeated loudly.

‘Yes, Golden Buzzer!’



And with that all the cats seemed to flinch a bit. They finished the last bit of salmon and sardine crumble, and left the alley in a sweet, normal cat-type way – sniffing at walls along the way, chewing bits

of grass and running gently down the street back to their rightful houses.

‘Golden Buzzer,’ the Crumble Lady said, and shook her head at the Cat Lady. ‘What a cheek!’

Constable Seaweed passed Large Eddie to his officers and joined the women. ‘No more Golden Buzzer for you. We’ve got your antics on camera,’ said Constable Seaweed. ‘You won’t be hypnotising any more cats for a while. Off you go.’

And just to be nice (*Constable Seaweed was really actually REALLY nice*) he pulled out a lemon smelly wet-wipe from his pocket to put over her nose. He had nabbed the cat criminal.

**AND HE WAS HAPPY! THE CRIME WAS SOLVED.**

‘How is your leg?’ he asked the Crumble Lady who was leaning against the wall.

‘I must say I could do with getting back. Maybe make myself a lovely cherry crumble, and eat it with some custard and cream. And top that off with a

well-earned nap!

Two days later, Pearl came to pick up Jack. 'I hope Jack wasn't any trouble?' she asked.

'Absolutely not,' the Crumble Lady fibbed. 'He was a lovely cat and great company while I had my bad leg.'

It wasn't Jack's fault that he'd been hypnotised. And all the jewels had been returned to their rightful owners anyhow.

She handed over a purring Jack to Pearl, and just to make sure he was completely, absolutely, *completely* de-hyponotised, she said, 'GOLDEN BUZZER!'.

He seemed to *WINK* at the Crumble Lady in a knowing and thankful way.

# MAKE YOUR OWN CRUMBLE

## Cat Food Crumble



A delicious cat food crumble for your cat.

Cats don't eat flour – that would be silly – so use cat crunchy kibbles as their 'crumble'.

## INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons of wet cat food

2 tablespoons of dry crunchy kibbles

Dollop the wet cat food in a lovely clean dish. Dollop the kibbles on top.

Serve at room temperature with bowl of water by the side!

I hope you have enjoyed reading the Crumble Lady stories!

While writing them, lots of tunes and lyrics came into my mind and... as well as writing the book, I've written a whole album about the Crumble Lady! You can listen to these songs on Spotify or buy the CD!

But what's on the *The Crumble Lady* album?

There's the Crumble Lady theme, a Cat Food Crumble dance routine, Shake Your Maracas, the Lack of Plaque Rap and many, many more!

All the songs are very catchy and I'd love to hear you singing along! Go on, you know you want to!

