For the real Women of Steel

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into the crane."

"Did you do it?" Freya asked.

"She ran up it… ran up it like a monkey," Audrey chuckled.

"I can do that," Leila cried. "I can be a monkey!"

"I bet you can!" Ethel agreed.

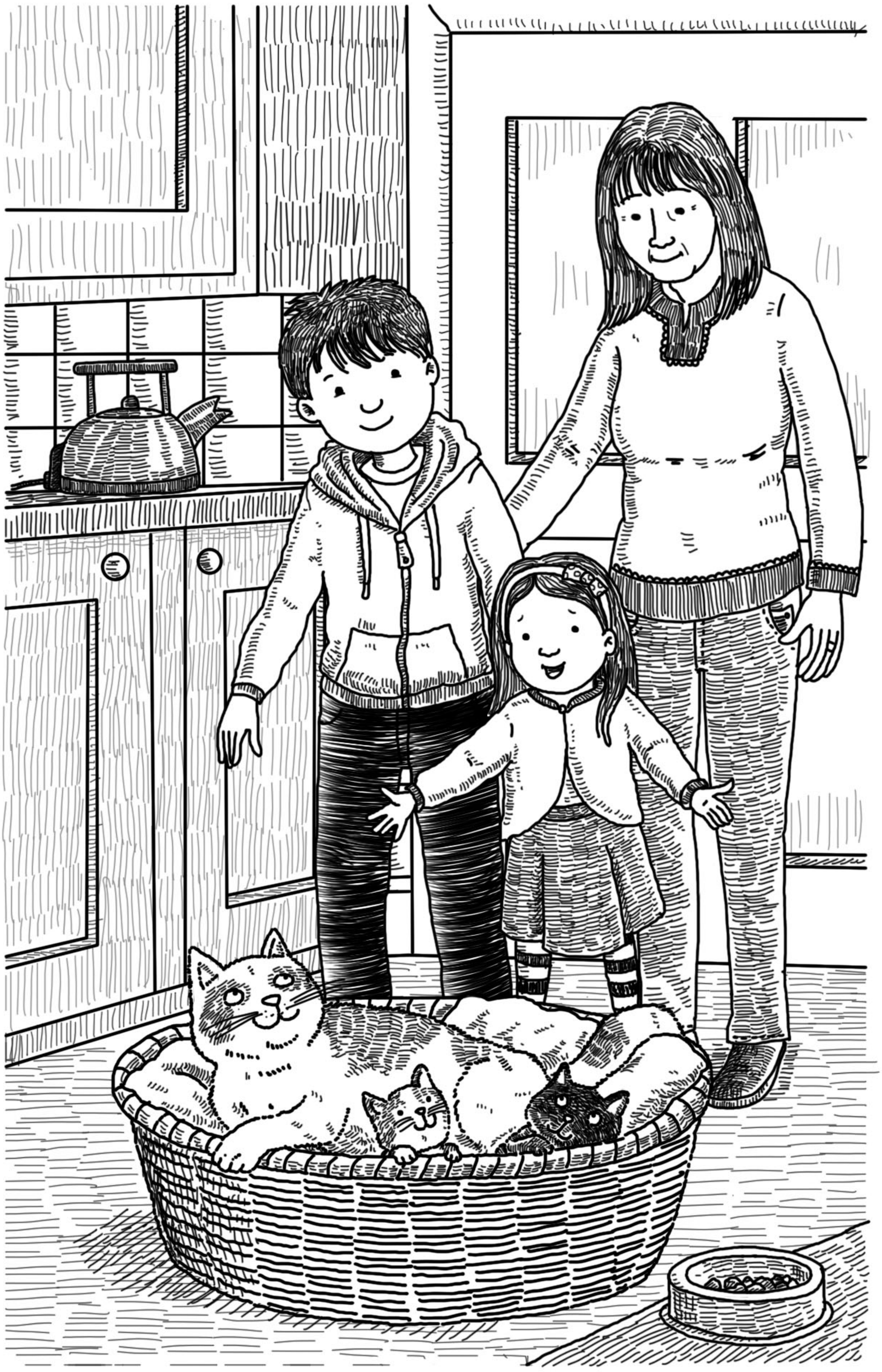
We all smiled, but then we fell silent and thoughtful once more.

"But it must have been terribly hard work for you both… and so very dangerous as well!" Grandma said.

"Well… it was the noise that was the worst thing," Audrey said. "The whole place clattered and crashed all day… and it was hot… boiling hot in there. We came home dripping with sweat and sometimes we had to go to work in the dark, with only a tiny shaded torch to see where you walked… I didn't like that."

Ethel sighed at her memories. "When we worked night shifts and the bombs came over, I was really scared!" she admitted. "We





the works."

The other woman wore dungarees. She had a headscarf tied round her head, fastened in a knot at the front. I reached up to touch it, guessing that a woman with long hair might get it caught in machinery, if it was left loose. She wore a shirt, with sleeves rolled up and her arms looked strong, powerful. I reached out to link my arm through hers and I smiled as I did it, because it felt like we were suddenly friends.

Grandma fished around in her bag for her mobile phone.

"OK… are you ready for a photograph?" she asked. "Leila can stand at the front, in between the two women, because she's small enough not to block out the statues. You two link arms on either side! There's plenty of sun; it should look good."

Leila stepped in front of the statues and leaned back against them. The sun shone down onto our faces and it was warm and pleasant there, but the sun was so bright that I





kids," she said. "You shouldn't be here… but seeing as you are, you can come dance with me."

We all got up and danced with Audrey, but then Danny started to play a new tune that was slower and softer. Audrey nodded towards Ethel and winked at some of her friends. One or two of them stopped dancing and went to sit down, others followed, until at last there was only Ethel and Frank still dancing, their arms wrapped around each other, contented smiles on their faces.

I began to feel warm, happy and a little sleepy too. I think I must have closed my eyes for a moment. The gentle tune went on, but suddenly I realised that I could hear trumpets and drums, rather than the piano. I opened my eyes to find that Frank and Ethel had vanished and the big shop and the statues stood tall and solid beside us. The music was coming from Uncle Steve's phone.

"What… what happened?" I said. "Did I see Ethel… and Frank, when they were young?"

