THE NINE LIVES OF FURRY PURRY BEANCAT



PHILIP ARDAGH

Illustrated by

Rob Biddulph


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Beancat adventures!
THE PIRATE CAPTAIN'S CAT
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coming soon!

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SIMON & SCHUSTER

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This one's for Ginger
Biscuit, my son's
much-loved moggy.
Philip Ardagh

For Flo
Rob Biddulph

Furry Purry Beancat found a patch of sunlight, followed her tail round in a circle three times, then settled herself down in a furry ball of purry cat. She yawned, lowered her head to the ground and pulled her beautiful, fluffy tail in front of her little pink nose.

Where will I wake up next? she wondered, slowly closing her big green eyes and drifting off to sleep . . .





CHAPTER 1
'THIEF!'

Furry Purry Beancat was woken by the sound of a steam whistle. She opened her big green eyes to find herself in a cloud of white smoke, her little pink nose filled with the smell of burning coal, engine oil, hot metal and a thousand and one other things.

She rather liked it!

As the smoke cleared, Beancat discovered that she was sitting on a large package wrapped in brown paper and string. This was on top of another package wrapped in brown paper and string on top of ANOTHER, all of which were on some kind of large, flat-bed trolley. She felt a bit like a present under a Christmas tree. But where was she?



You see, Furry Purry Beancat is no ordinary cat. Oh no. Beancat is an *extraordinary* cat because, after one of her special cat-naps, she wakes to find herself somewhere completely different! And every time she wakes up in another one of her nine lives, Beancat knows that an adventure is about to happen . . .

Furry Purry Beancat stood up, **streeeeeetched** and casually looked around, in the way that all cats do. And then she saw it, the reason for all the smoke. There was a steam engine. She was on a railway platform!

Passengers were climbing on and off the carriages, and clusters of people were either greeting new arrivals or saying fond

farewells. Some passengers were struggling with bags on their own. One man had a trunk almost as big as he was. Others were being helped by a tall, thin man in a smart uniform who had a trolley, much smaller and more upright than the one Beancat was sitting on.

'Hello, Tom!' said a passenger, with a wave. 'Busy as ever, I see.'

The man in the uniform smiled. 'That I am, sir,' he said. 'A porter's work is never done!'

Tom looks friendly, Furry Purry Beancat decided, only to have her thoughts rudely interrupted.

'Thief!' cried a well-dressed woman with a large nose and an even larger hat covered

in peacock feathers. Heads turned in the woman's direction, including Beancat's, and she watched a boy – who looked no more than nine or so – running full-speed ahead, weaving his way in and out of the people on the platform, clutching what had to be the lady's handbag. A soldier in bright red uniform, about to board the train, reached out to try to catch him, but the lad swerved to avoid his clutches.

He's fast, thought Beancat. *I'll give him that!*

Tom abandoned his trolley, lunged forward and grabbed the runaway by the waist, lifting him off the ground, his legs still running but in mid-air.

It might have looked comical, but Furry



Purry Beancat noticed that the boy had no shoes and that his feet were covered in soot and grime.

'Let me go!' cried the boy.

'Drop the bag,' said Tom.

The boy dropped the handbag on to the platform. Now he could lash out with his arms, but the porter was too strong for him, and the pummelling from the boy's clenched fists barely reached its target.

An older man, also in a railway uniform, jumped down from the guard's van at the rear of the train, and ran along the platform to help Tom.

He must work on the railway too, thought Beancat. The trouble with waking up in a different one of her nine lives each

time was that she had NO memory of having been there before. She didn't know WHERE she was, or even WHAT YEAR it was! Others may know her, but she wouldn't remember them!

Tom gently lowered the boy to the ground. He kept hold of one arm while the older man – who did indeed work for the railway as a train guard – took the other. Although the young thief was only small, the two men were making doubly sure that he wasn't going anywhere.

A man in a brown checked suit and bowler hat bent down and picked up the snatched handbag from the platform. He dusted it down with his hands, made his way over to the woman in the peacock-feathered

hat and handed it back to her. ‘There you go, madam,’ he said, touching the brim of his hat.

Furry Purry Beancat noticed he had a very impressive moustache. *But not as impressive as my tail*, she thought. And that wasn’t ALL she’d noticed.



'Thank you!' said the lady, looking flustered. Her face had gone a funny colour. 'I really am most grateful.' She took her handbag from the man.

'It was young Tom, 'ere, who caught 'im, ma'am,' said the train guard, nodding at the porter.

'It was indeed,' said the lady. 'I saw it all! I am grateful to you, Tom, and to you . . . ?' Her eyes fell on the guard.

'Jim, ma'am,' said the train guard. 'Jim Graves.' He touched the peak of his cap with his free hand, the other still gripping the arm of the boy.

There's a lot of hat-touching going on around here! thought Beancat. *It must be a sign of respect. A way of being polite.* She

noticed the man with the brown checked suit and bowler hat lose himself among the crowd of onlookers and head towards the exit. *As slippery as an eel,* she thought. *I'll bet he wore that brown checked suit and brown bowler hat on purpose. All people will remember is that and his moustache and nothing else about him. Not his face. Nothing.*

Beancat decided to get closer to the action. There was so much going on that no one paid attention to the beautiful, fluffy tabby-and-white cat as she walked among them, magnificent tail held high, watching with her big green eyes and listening with her tufty ears. (The truth be told, she wasn't used to being so totally ignored in this way!)