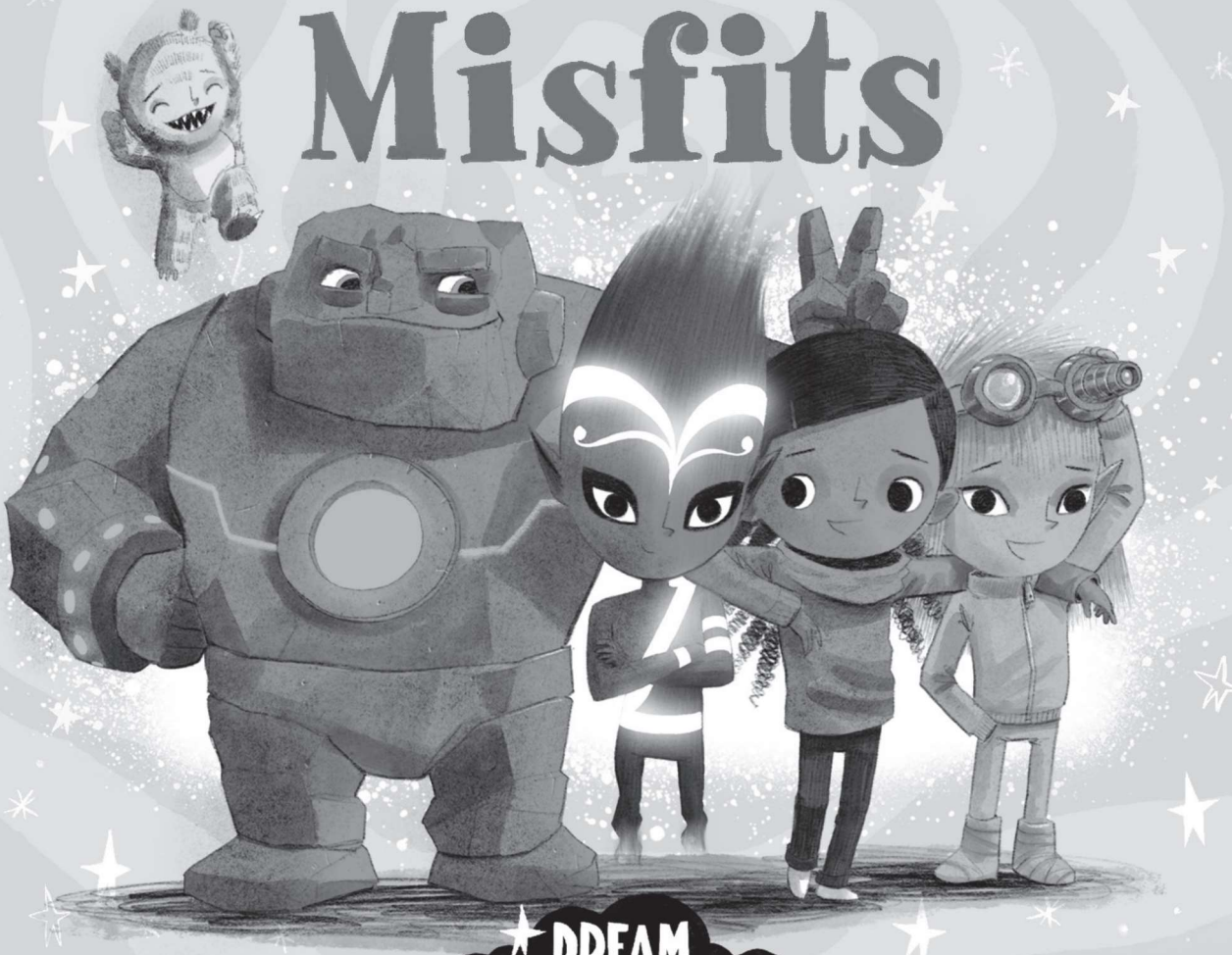
TOM PERCIVAL

'I would have loved this book as a child' Marcus Rashford MBE

MARCUS RASHFORD BOOKCLUB CHOICE

Silas AND THE Marvellous Misfits



A fantastic DREAM DEFENDERS adventure!



First published 2021 by Macmillan Children's Books
an imprint of Pan Macmillan
The Smithson, 6 Briset Street, London EC1M 5NR
EU representative: Macmillan Publishers Ireland Ltd, 1st Floor,
The Liffey Trust Centre, 117–126 Sheriff Street Upper
Dublin 1, D01 YC43
Associated companies throughout the world
www.panmacmillan.com

ISBN 978-1-5290-2919-2

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1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

With thanks to Holmen Paper, Gould Paper Sales
and CPI Books for their support.



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This book is dedicated to the most wonderful and highly esteemed Salote Thacker.

I hope that you enjoy it, Salote!

Welcome to my Book Club.

I'm so excited that you are able to join us. I hope you have a smile on your face today.

The book I have hand-selected for you is ***Silas and the Marvellous Misfits****. It's a great story that shows you just how special it is to be yourself – to champion and celebrate the difference in one another.*

This book is for you to escape into, it's to inspire you and to help you to find adventure. And it belongs to you and only you – I want you to take it home tonight and write your name in it. Tell your friends that this book was chosen by me for you.

If you're struggling, don't be afraid to ask for help. We all need help along the way – me included. Enjoy every word at your own pace and remember that there's no rush to get to the end.

Get that head of yours high and let's conquer the day together.

With love,



MR

CHAPTER 1

Erika swam upwards through a cloud that smelled strongly of marshmallows. She glanced over at Beastling, swimming along beside her. He smiled and mumbled, '**Heebie Jeebie**,' through the thickening cloud.





As he spoke, a speech bubble popped out of his mouth, showing a picture of a thumbs up and a smiley face. Erika grinned and looked down at her timer. Twenty-five seconds. That was all they had before the cloud turned into a marshmallow and plunged to the ground in a deadly (but completely delicious) mess. This was not something that Erika wanted to happen – at least, not with them still inside the cloud!

BZZZZZT!

Erika's communications device buzzed and a gravelly voice spoke. 'Hey, Erika.

Listen, while you're back at Head Quarters getting that truth cannon, can you bring me a couple of doughnuts please?'

'What?' gasped Erika, struggling not to breathe in too much marshmallow. 'Look, Wade, I'm kind of busy right now!'

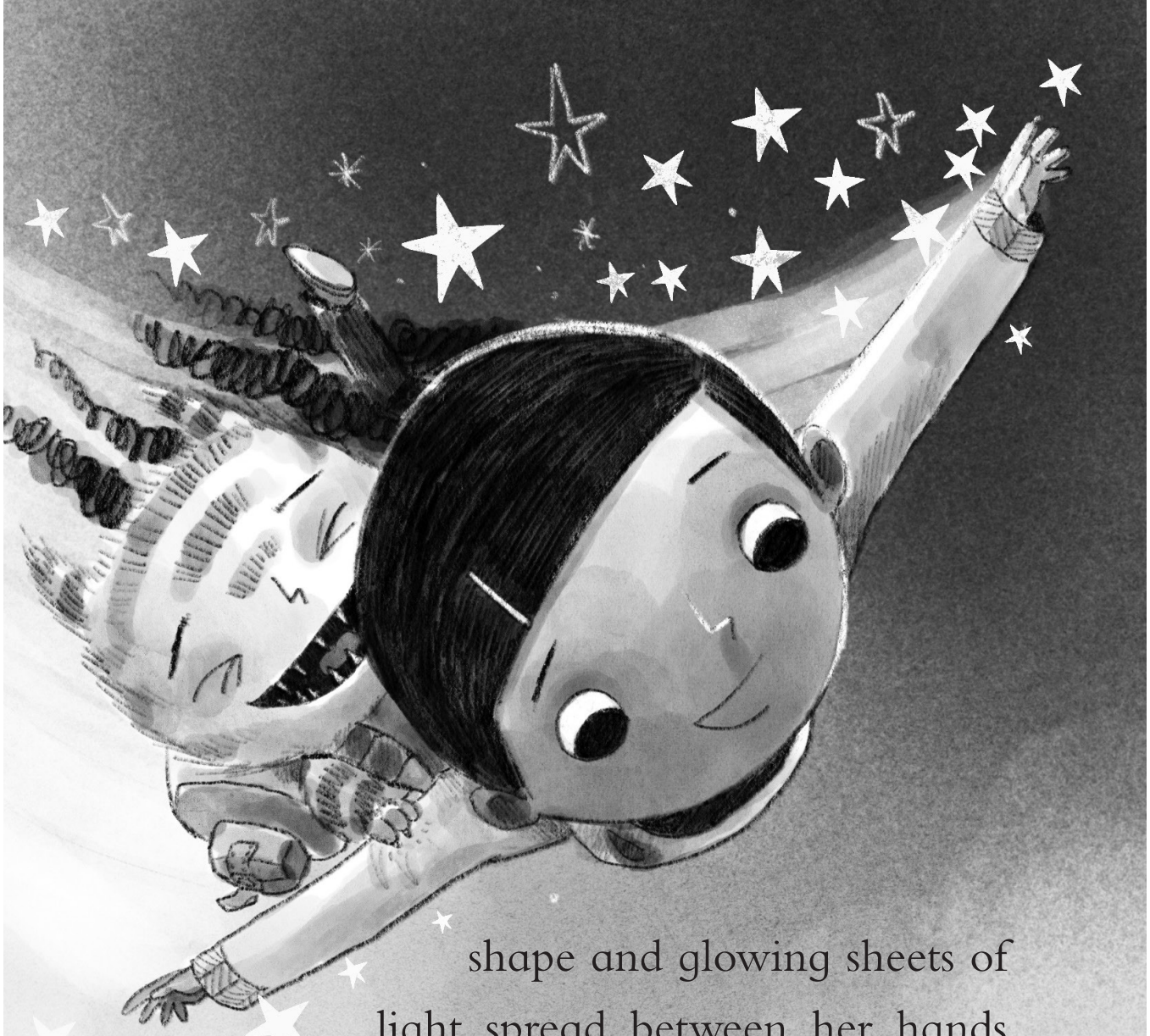
'Oh yeah, of course,' replied Wade. 'Sorry. And good luck!' There was a pause. 'But don't forget the doughnuts.' Then he ended the call.

Erika shook her head and swam faster.

Seventeen seconds later, Erika and Beastling popped out the top of the cloud, just as it became too thick to swim through. They sprinted to the edge and leaped off as the marshmallow cloud began to tumble towards the ground far

below. Beastling followed close behind her. He *had* to. Erika and Beastling were bonded together, which meant that they could only ever be a few metres apart from each other. It had been that way since Erika's first adventure in the Dreamscape. Well, technically, it was ever since Beastling had first *bitten* her that they'd been bonded together – but that was a long time ago, and there was no point getting upset about it now.

Cold wind tore at Erika's skin as Beastling manoeuvred himself through the air and grabbed her shoulders. She thrust her arms and legs out in a star



shape and glowing sheets of light spread between her hands and feet like wings, creating a flying suit that Erika could steer and control.

'Only the best for the **DREAM DEFENDERS**, right?' yelled Erika, grinning. If she tried to tell her friends at school

about any of this they would think she had gone mad! It wasn't like you could just say, 'By the way, I'm part of the **DREAM DEFENDERS**, a top-secret organization that helps children solve any problems they're having in their dreams.'

Her friends hadn't even believed her when she said her uncle had a Ferrari, so there was NO WAY they'd believe any of *this*!

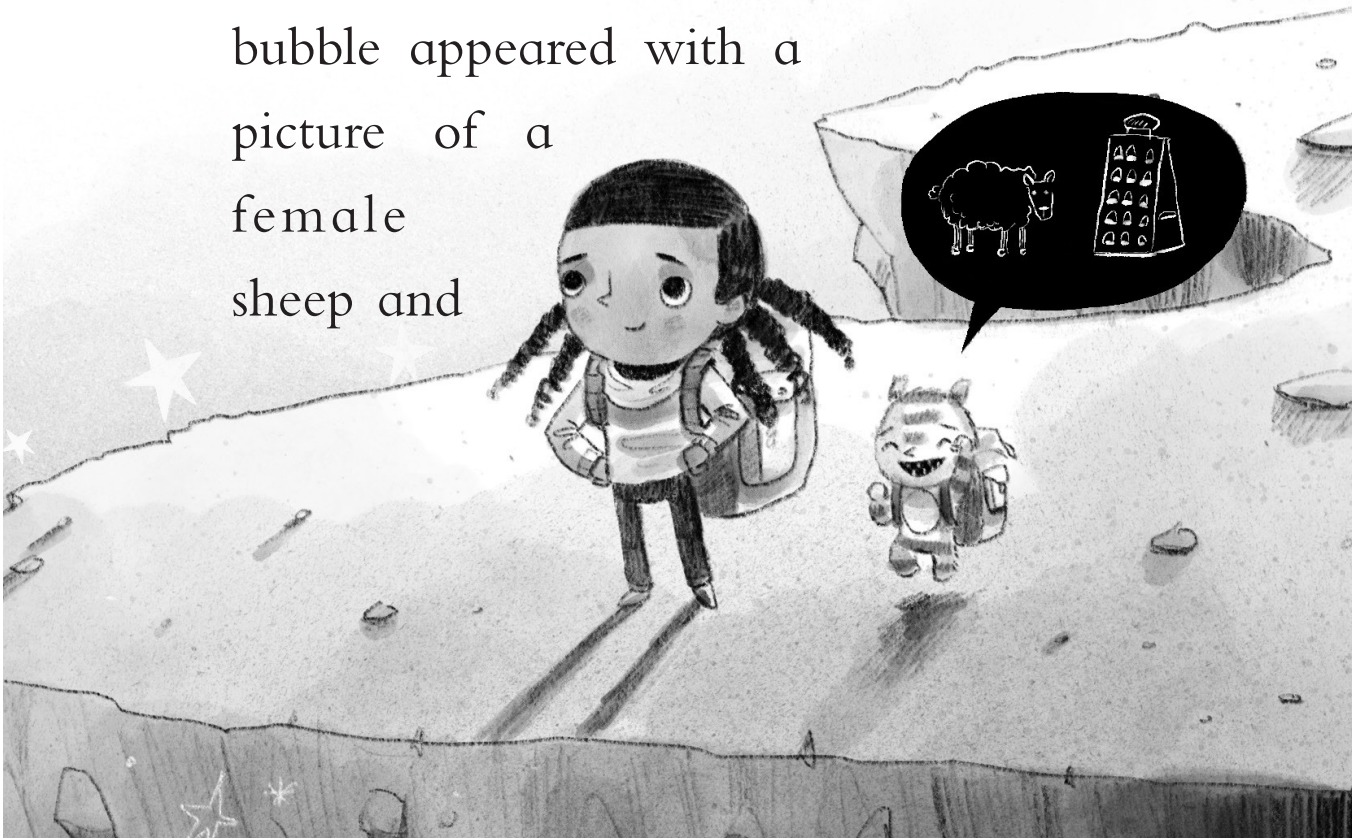
To be fair to Erika's friends, her uncle *didn't* have a Ferrari. But he did have a red car that looked kind of sporty.

Erika twisted her body around, steering them towards the flattened top of an upside-down mountain in the distance. She looked at the impossible

world around her as they shot through the air: far below a forest grew on the underside of a nearby cloud. The Dreamscape really was an amazing place.

A couple of seconds later they landed on the top of the mountain.

'Heebie Jeebie!' cried Beastling, punching the air excitedly. A speech bubble appeared with a picture of a female sheep and



a cheese grater in it. Erika smiled and ruffled Beastling's fur.

'Ewe grate too!' she said with a grin. 'Let's get inside and find the others!'

Erika and Beastling crept down a roughly carved set of steps leading deep within the mountain. Damp, stale air drifted lazily down the corridor as Erika peered around.

'Where is everyone?' she muttered. 'This is where we were supposed to meet.'

'*Psst* . . . Erika!' a voice suddenly whispered from behind her.

Erika yelped and spun around – there was nobody there.

'Sorry!' continued the voice. 'I didn't mean to startle you. I know it can be

dangerous for a human's heartbeat to become too elevated. Do you want me to hum some soothing music?' The disembodied voice stopped speaking and started humming. Badly.

'Silas?' interrupted Erika. 'Is that you? Why are you invisible? And *please* stop humming.'

The humming stopped. 'Oh. Am I still invisible?'

'*Yes!*' replied Erika.

'Ah! Right. Give me a second . . .' The air shimmered and suddenly the drifting, insubstantial figure of a boy appeared. Swirls of light covered his face and body, and even when he was fully visible he still faded away to nothing just below the knees.



‘Ta-daaaa!’
exclaimed Silas.
‘Better?’

‘Much better!’ said Erika.
‘So, have you worked out how
to solve Miles’s problem
yet?’

Silas shook his head. 'Not yet, but *hopefully* the truth cannon will help! Did you get it?'

Erika nodded and Beastling pointed to the weighty backpacks they were both carrying.

'Great!' exclaimed Silas. 'Wade and Sim have gone ahead to the centre of the mountain with Miles. That's where all the negative energy is coming from.'

'So, what are we waiting for?' asked Erika. 'Let's go!'