

For Noah.

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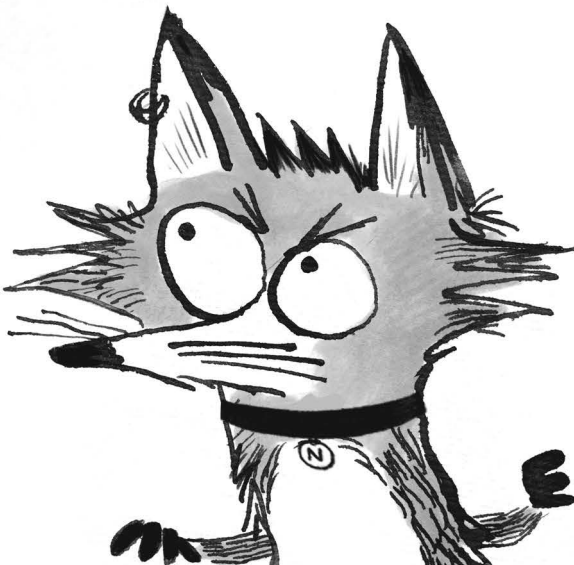
REAL
NO ANIMALS WERE HARMED
IN THE MAKING OF THIS BOOK

CHAPTER ONE
Ted and Nancy

This is Ted.



And this is Nancy.



Like a lot of foxes, they lived in a big city. Nancy was the bravest and boldest fox Ted had ever known. He couldn't remember having a mum or a dad, but he had always had Nancy. She made sure he had food and somewhere warm to sleep.

As well as looking after Ted, Nancy liked to mooch around the city with her friends. She knew every street, every dark alley, every bin and every hiding place. Nancy was TOUGH. She had no time for laughing or sniffing flowers or reading comics. But Nancy didn't need those things, oh no.

Ted, on the other hand, was a sweet little fox cub. He liked staying close to the den, which was hidden inside some spiky holly bushes in the corner of a huge park. Ted liked to roll around on the grass in the sunshine, snuffle through twigs and leaves, and lick up dropped

ice-cream cones. Every now and then Nancy would trot by and drop off a snack for him.





Nancy preferred coffee.

It kept her ALERT.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2.

Though sometimes, if she drank too much, she would shake and bark and Ted would have to sit on her head to calm her down.

'Chill out, Nancy.'



'Thanks, bro.'

Yes, Ted and Nancy were a great pair of foxes, and they had everything they needed. Well, almost everything. Lately, Ted had noticed a weird, achy feeling in his chest. He had it whenever he watched Nancy trot away, leaving him alone in the den. He had it when he saw her chatting with her fox friends, Bin and Hedge. He had it when he saw the cute little humans in

the park holding hands with their big humans. Sometimes he would have it at night, when he would sit on top of a large rock, look up at the big, dark sky and give a heavy sigh.

One afternoon, Ted was curled up in the den when he heard music. Someone was playing the guitar. And then a high, reedy little voice began to sing a gentle song.

Oh, hello, my great big pal
Oh, hello, my sweet amigo
I never feel alone
When my best friend comes to town

Won't you hold my hand and smile
And together you and me
Will laugh and sing and dance and skip
And never be lonelyyyy . . .





Ted scrambled out of the den.

'That's it!' he cried. 'I'm **LONELY!** I need friends.'

He looked at the grasshopper who had sung the song.

'Hello! Will **YOU** be my friend, little grasshopper?' he asked. '*You* like to sing, *I* like to sing – we have a lot in common!'

'Get lost,' said the grasshopper, boinging away.

Ted's tail drooped, but then he rubbed his paws together. At least now he knew what the achy feeling in his heart was, he could set about fixing it. And there was no time like the present.

Just then, he heard a noise coming from the bin.

'Coo... Coo... Coo...

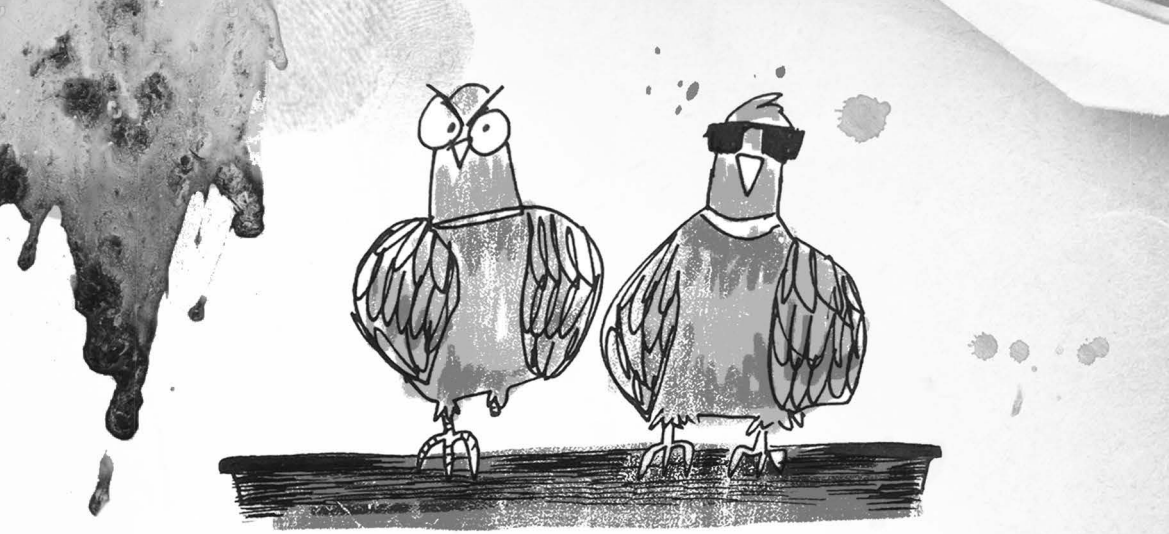
IS THERE ANY KETCHUP IN THERE?'

'Coo... Coo... CAN'T SEE ANY.

OOH, WHAT ABOUT MAYO?"

'THAT'LL HAVE TO DO, I SUPPOSE...

COO... COO...'



Two pigeons were perched on the edge of the bin, pecking out crumbs of crisps and apple and goodness knows what.

'Hello!' said Ted. He'd seen these pigeons before. One of them only had one foot, and the other was wearing sunglasses.

'Go away,' said the one-footed pigeon.

'My name's Ted. I recognize you!' said Ted.

The pigeon glared at him.

'I bet you do,' said the pigeon wearing sunglasses. 'Your sister bit his foot off.'

Ted blushed. 'Oh . . .' he said. 'I'm so sorry.'

'What do you want, kid?' said the one-footed pigeon.

'Well,' said Ted shyly. 'It's just that I've seen you guys around and I get a bit lonely all on my own in the den. I was wondering, um . . . would you like to be my friends?'

The pigeons shook their heads.

'You must be joking, pal,' said the one-footed pigeon. 'I'd like to keep my other foot, thank you.'

And they hopped and fluttered off to another bin far, far away.

'Oh well,' said Ted, patting himself on the head. 'At least you tried. That's the main thing.'

He was about to make up a song about it when he spotted two shadowy figures perched on a park bench. They had whiskers! They had tails! Ted's nose twitched in fear. **CATS!** One of them was draining a can of something into its mouth, while the other one was licking itself somewhere rude. Both of them stopped every now and then to do some evil yowling.

Ted whimpered and tried to creep away. He lifted one paw and put it down gently . . . and lifted another paw and put it down gently . . . and lifted *another* paw and—

'AWOOOGA! Let's party!'

Ted had accidentally stepped on Sharon the Party Crow.

'SHHHHHHH!' shhhh'd Ted.

'Party time – ACTIVATED!'

said Sharon, who then blew a kazoo extremely loudly.



The cats jolted upright and glared at Ted with scary yellow eyes.

'Hissss,' they hissed.

'AAAARGH!' aaaargh'd Ted.

He ran back to the den as quick as his furry little legs could carry him.



Nancy was in the den with her pals, Bin and Hedge. They were pulling silly faces and taking photos of each other on their phones.

Ted dived into the den, wide-eyed and panting.

'What's up with you?' said Nancy.

He pointed behind him, whimpering and jumping up and down on the spot.

Nancy grabbed Ted's ears and slowly stroked them until he calmed down.

'C-c-c-cats!' he eventually gasped.

'Was it HER?' asked Nancy sharply.

Ted shook his head.

'Well, don't freak out then! The other cats ain't gonna do nothin' to you, Ted.'

Ted sighed and shuffled over to his corner of the den.

Nancy rolled her eyes at Bin and Hedge. She and Ted were going to have to have a chat.

'See you later, yeah?' she said.

'All right, Nance, later,' said Bin.



Nancy sat next to Ted, who was curled up in a corner cuddling Slipper, which was an old slipper with a smiley face drawn onto it. He'd had it since he was a tiny cub.

'When are Mum and Dad coming home, Nancy?' Ted said.

Nancy sighed.