For David, Oren and Robin
– PNL

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The Night Train



Matilda Woods Penny Neville-Lee

LITTLE TIGER
LONDON



"Final call for the Night Train," the guard yelled, holding open the carriage door. "Express train to Sleepy Town Platform ZZZ. No stops!"

The guard was about to close the door when he noticed a hairy white yeti lumbering across the platform. He was almost invisible against the thick snow that swirled about, except for the bright red roses on his bag.

"Good evening, Charles," said the yeti as he neared the carriage.

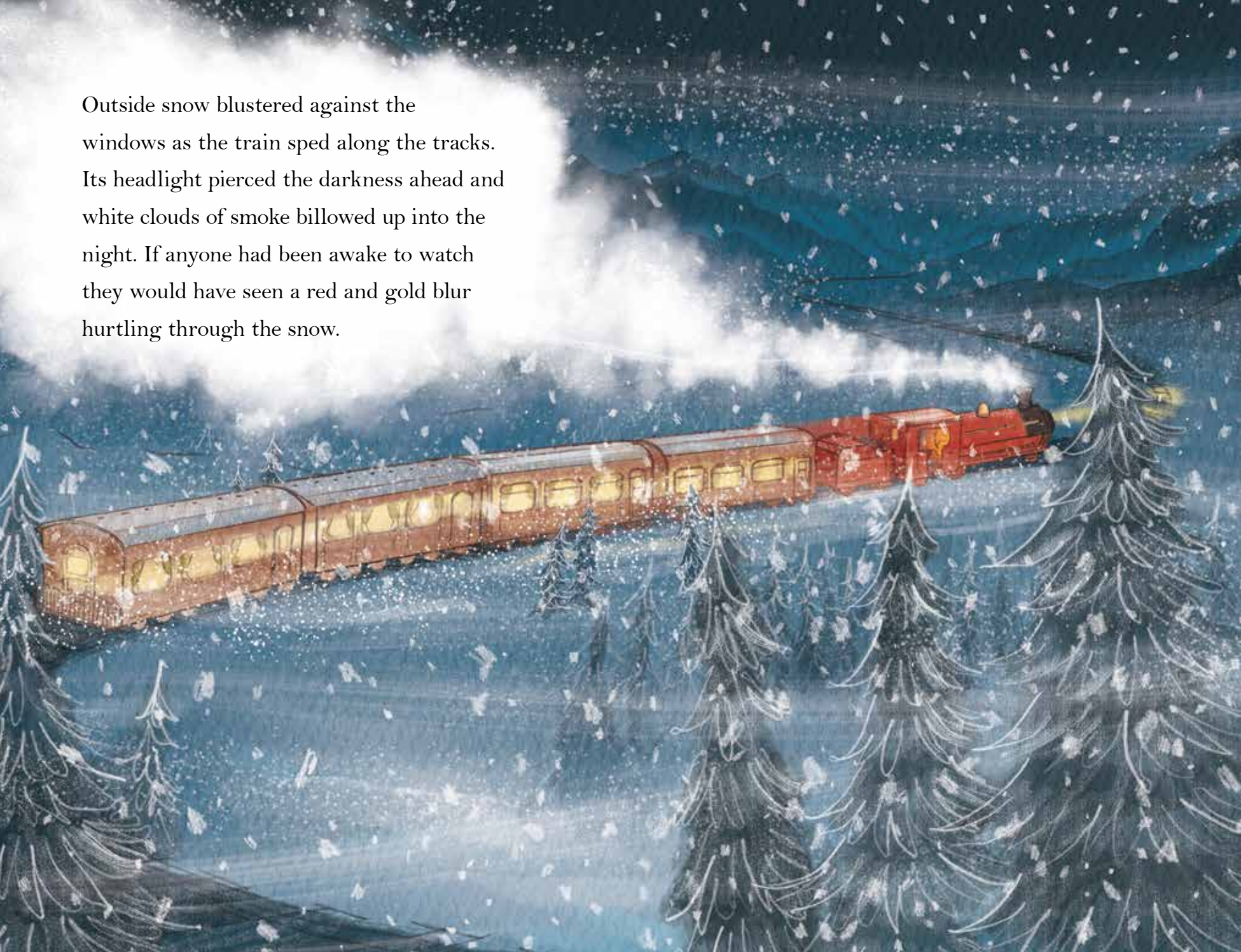
"Late again, Mr Yeti," grumbled the guard. "Do hurry up. We can't afford any delays!"



The yeti climbed on board and Charles jumped in behind him. The train let out a shrill whistle and set off into the night.

Inside the carriage it was warm and bright. The yeti took a seat on one of the large velvet sofas and nodded a hello to the other passengers. Then he took a cup and saucer and a large floral teapot out of his bag. He poured himself a cup of tea and added in a couple of ice cubes to cool it down.



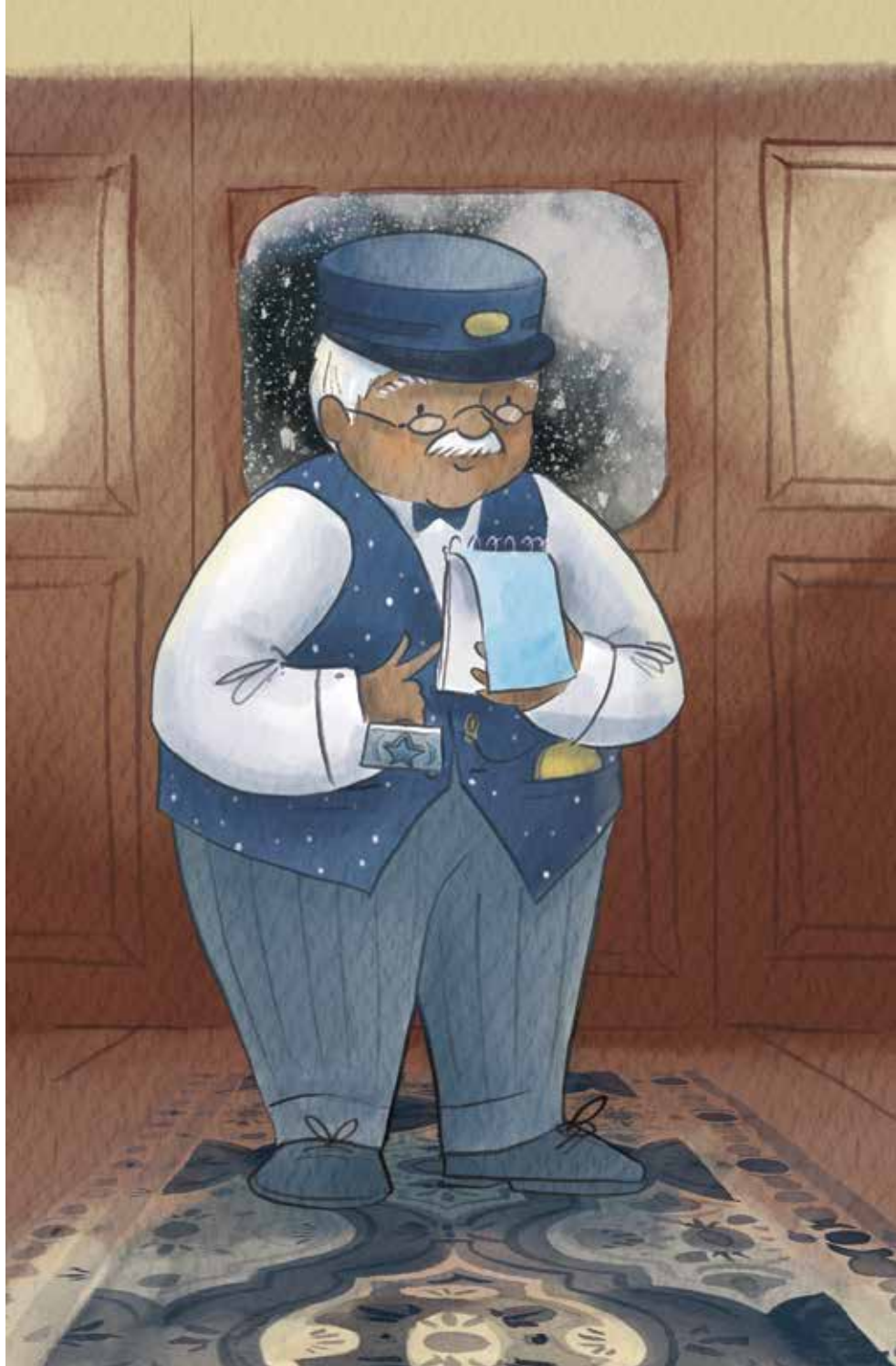


Outside snow blustered against the windows as the train sped along the tracks. Its headlight pierced the darkness ahead and white clouds of smoke billowed up into the night. If anyone had been awake to watch they would have seen a red and gold blur hurtling through the snow.

Charles checked his watch. It was already 11:30 p.m. They were behind schedule. If the train didn't reach Sleepy Town by midnight, the special passengers would miss their chance to shine in the dreams they belonged in.

To keep his mind off the time, Charles pulled out his stamp and passenger list.

"Tickets, please!" he called as he walked through the carriage.



Charles approached the first passenger who was using the handrail as a barre to stretch his legs. He hadn't met this passenger before but he didn't have the nerves of a first timer.

"And you are?" Charles asked the passenger.

"I'm Henri." The man handed over his ticket. "At first my dreamer, Jack, made me a football player. I was the greatest in the world. Now I'm learning ballet. Tonight is my first performance. I'm dancing in front of the Queen."

"My, my. That *is* impressive," said Charles. "I hope it goes well."



Charles moved on to the next passenger. She was a small girl with a diamond tiara and a pet dragon. The dragon was blowing puffs of smoke on the window and the girl was drawing cats in the fog. Charles hadn't met her before either. He looked at his list.

"You must be…"

"Princess May," she said, handing Charles her ticket. "In my first dream I sat in a tower with my dragon, Ruby, and waited for a prince to rescue me. It was so boring. Then my dreamer, Poppy, dreamed that I escaped the tower and we've been travelling the land ever since. Tonight, we're going to the Dragon Isles to meet Ruby's family."

"It's always nice to visit your family," said Charles. He checked her ticket and continued through the carriage.

