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Magic Animal Café: Robbie the Rebel Squirrel

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Sweet Cherry



Chapter One

Ellie stared at the torn piece of newspaper in her hands and gasped.

'What's wrong?' Blake asked, stopping what he was doing.

'This photo … it's my great-grandfather.'

'He was in the paper? How come?'

Ellie and Blake had been tearing off the papers that had covered up the old building's windows. The papers

had been there for many years. Now that the building was ready to become a new cat café, it was time to let in some light and show it off to the world.

When Ellie didn't answer, Blake looked over her shoulder. He read the headline out loud: '"Local vet committed to" – something. Hey, it's ripped! Where's the rest of it?'

'I don't know.' Ellie stared at the photo of a man with messy hair, an untidy beard and intense eyes. 'He used to own this building. He left it to Mum when he died a few years ago. I've never met him, but Mum once showed me photos of him. He looked different, but ... he was a vet, just like this says. It *must* be him.'

'Is he the one who had a few –' Blake tapped the side of his head '– problems?'

'Yeah.' Ellie stared at the photo in the newspaper. Her great-grandfather hadn't looked so messy in the photos Mum had shown her. In those, he had slicked-back hair and a neatly trimmed beard. His eyes had shone with happiness. Ellie wondered what had happened to change him.



‘So, what’s the story with him?’ Blake asked

Ellie shrugged. ‘Mum never said.’

‘You can ask her now.’

‘I could, but Mum doesn’t like talking about him. She was pretty upset when he died.’

After a moment, Blake asked: ‘What does “committed” mean?’

‘I’m not sure what it means here,’ Ellie admitted, looking at the paper again. ‘This says, “committed to” ... and the rest is gone.’

‘It was his phone, wasn’t it?’ Blake asked. ‘The magic one?’

When Ellie first moved into the building, she’d found a mysterious old trunk locked away in a cupboard. Inside the trunk was an old-fashioned black telephone. After dialling a number written on it, Ellie and Blake were both stunned and delighted to discover that they were able to talk to animals. For the first time, Ellie wondered whether her great-grandfather was able to do that too. Maybe he was the one who wrote the numbers on the dial!

Suddenly, Ellie was seized with a need to find out more about her great-grandfather.

‘Where’s the rest of the article? Let’s check the floor.’

Ellie and Blake fell to their knees and started searching through the pile of torn pages. Blake's Labrador puppy joined in enthusiastically, digging with his oversized paws.

'No, Choccy!' Blake scolded. 'Your claws are ripping up the papers!'

'I help,' the puppy panted, his tongue hanging out with the effort.



'Don't help. Just leave it alone. I said stop!' Blake grabbed his dog's collar and held it with both hands. 'Ellie, you keep looking.'

'I'm trying, but there's nothing here.'

'There must be. Unless Choccy ate it ...'

'Is something wrong, kids?' Ellie's mum came in from the storage room. Her long flowing dress swept the floor behind her.

'I dropped something,' Ellie said, not looking her mum in the eye. 'Blake's helping me look for it.'

'Right, well I'll leave you to it,' her mum said. 'I've got to get something from upstairs.' Bracelets jangling,