For Nick Cross - P.H.

Paula, Here's to you! What a ride! - J.L.

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Kitty

and the Vanishing Act



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Chapter 1

Kitty waved her magician's wand in the air. Pumpkin, a small ginger kitten, sat on the bed watching her excitedly.

'For my next trick, I will make the rabbit reappear. Abracadabra!' Kitty snatched away a silky black



handkerchief to reveal a toy rabbit underneath.

Pumpkin clapped his paws. 'That was amazing, Kitty! Show me another trick.'



Kitty beamed. Pumpkin was her best friend and they always had great fun together. She rummaged inside her magic set and pulled out an orange balloon. 'How about a magical balloon trick next?'

'Ooh, yes please!' Pumpkin scampered up and down Kitty's bed, his tiny magician's cape fluttering. A black top hat was perched lopsidedly on his head.



Kitty and Pumpkin had been playing magic tricks ever since they'd seen the posters about The Great Marella hanging outside the theatre a few days before.

The Great Marella was a famous magician who performed magic shows all over the world. She was known for her incredible conjuring tricks and her glittering costumes, and she had an animal assistant, a fluffy white poodle called Crystal. She would be performing at the Diamond Light

Theatre for the next three nights and every single show was sold-out.

Kitty blew up the orange balloon and looked at the next page in her magic book. 'You could help with this next bit, Pumpkin. It says here we should tap the balloon three times with my wand and then say the magic words—Hey Presto!'

'Imagine being a real magician's assistant!' said Pumpkin. 'It must be so scary to stand on a stage in front of hundreds of people with those bright

lights shining on you.'

Kitty shrugged. 'I think some people like being the centre of attention.'

There was a sharp tapping at the window.

'Oh, what's that?' cried Pumpkin.

Kitty jumped too and her balloon burst in a cascade of golden glitter. She and Pumpkin hurried to the window and pulled back the curtain to find Figaro waiting outside.

Kitty opened the window to let him in. 'Hello, Figaro! You made us jump. Come and see the magic tricks we've been practising.'



Figaro leapt inside, his black-and-white tail quivering. ‘Kitty, there’s an emergency! I had to come and find you right away.’

‘Oh no! What is it?’ said Kitty, in alarm. ‘Is Pixie in danger again? Are the alley cats causing trouble?’

‘No, it’s worse than that!’ said Figaro. ‘I was at the Diamond Light Theatre this evening to see The Great Marella perform her magic show.’



‘Ooh, what was it like?’ said Pumpkin.

Figaro smoothed his elegant black whiskers. ‘The theatre was packed and there was an incredible atmosphere. The lights—the music—the costumes—well you know how much I like the theatre, don’t you? I just love a show!’

Kitty nodded. ‘But what happened, Figaro? You said it was an emergency.’

‘Everything went well until The

Great Marella performed a vanishing trick with her poodle, Crystal,' Figaro explained. 'The little dog ran up some steps and jumped into a shiny gold box sitting on the magician's table. Then Marella waved her wand and said the magic words and—Hey Presto!—the box was empty!'

'Wasn't that supposed to happen?' said Pumpkin, looking puzzled.

'Yes, but Crystal was supposed to reappear again, and she never did,' said Figaro. 'Marella kept saying the magic

words and nothing happened. She waved her wand hundreds of times and then she burst into tears and ran off the stage.'

'Poor Marella!' cried Kitty. 'So what happened to the poodle?'

Figaro shook his head. 'No one knows. They searched the whole theatre from top to bottom and she was absolutely nowhere.'

'Ooh, that's spooky!' Pumpkin shivered.

'But dogs can't really disappear,'

said Kitty. 'Crystal must be somewhere and maybe we can help find her.'

Figaro looked pleased. 'I knew you would help! The show must go on—as they say—and Marella can't perform tomorrow night without her assistant. With your superpowers, Kitty, I bet you could find Crystal in no time!'

Spinning around, Kitty dashed to her wardrobe. 'I'll get my mask and cape right away!'

Kitty had a special secret. She was a superhero-in-training and her cat-like superpowers let her run, jump, and balance just as skilfully as a cat. She had super senses that let her see in the dark and hear sounds from a long distance away. She could also talk to animals and she'd been on many exciting moonlit adventures with her cat crew.

'Let's go to the theatre and look for clues!'

Kitty put on her mask and cape.



Then she climbed out of the window and sprang lightly on to the top of the roof.

The full moon was rising over the chimney pots. Kitty stretched up high and turned three somersaults in a row.

Her skin tingled as her superpowers grew stronger. She gazed down at the orange streetlamps lining the city streets far below. The wind stirred the trees making the leaves whisper, but most of the city lay quiet and still.





'The theatre's this way!' Kitty called back. 'It should only take us a few minutes to get there,' and she leapt to the next roof, her cape flying up in the air.

'We're right behind you, Kitty!' said Pumpkin.

The moon rose higher, pouring silvery light over the rooftops. Kitty somersaulted over a chimney pot and kept on running.

The Great Marella must be so upset over losing Crystal. Kitty knew she'd feel terrible if one of her cat crew went missing. She had to help find the little dog as fast as she could.

'Slow down, Kitty!' gasped Figaro. 'I can't keep up.'

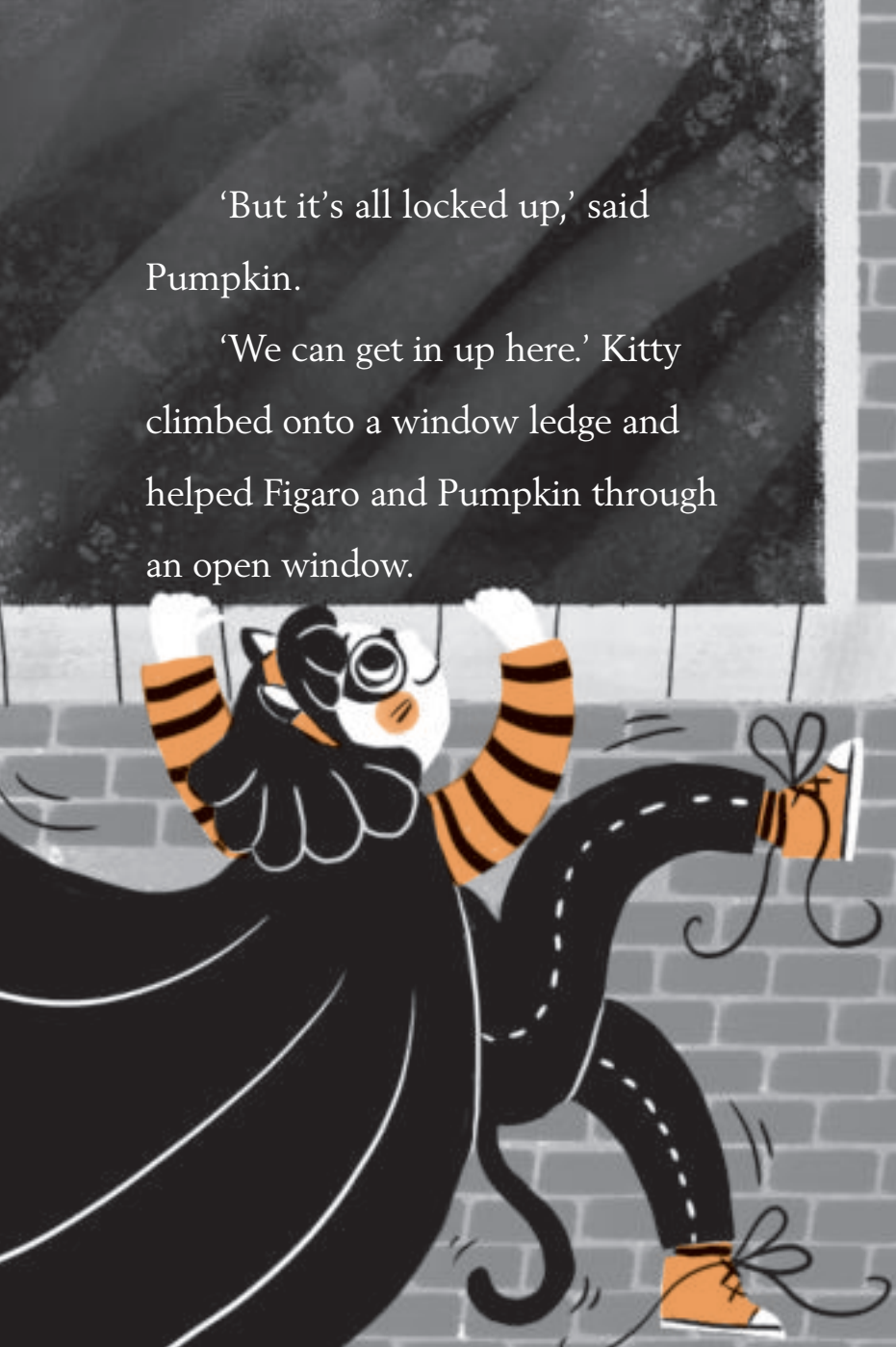
Kitty stopped to wait for her friends. ‘Sorry, Figaro! We’re almost there now.’

They clambered down a drainpipe and hurried around a corner. Straight ahead stood a magnificent building with tall stone columns and a huge wooden door. A sign that read Diamond Light Theatre was displayed in glowing orange lights and there were posters of the upcoming shows pasted on the walls.



‘But it’s all locked up,’ said Pumpkin.

‘We can get in up here.’ Kitty climbed onto a window ledge and helped Figaro and Pumpkin through an open window.



They dropped onto a grand balcony at the top of some stairs. Then they crept through the nearest doors into the back of the dark auditorium. Long rows of cushioned seats sloped down to a brightly lit stage framed by orange velvet curtains. A splendid backdrop pictured The Great Marella in her glittery costume with her dog, Crystal, beside her.

Kitty caught her breath. It was so exciting to be here inside the theatre! The place was so huge and empty that

it made her skin prickle. She imagined Crystal vanishing in front of hundreds of people. Where had the little dog gone and how were they going to find her again?

