Chapter One



"Don't forget your lunch!" Mum called out and Scarlett darted back into the kitchen with a squeak – she nearly had.

Mum was doing up the straps of Poppy's pushchair, ready for the dash down the road to the station. They were lucky that it was nearby – close enough for the sound of trains to help Scarlett drift off to sleep at night and wake her

up every morning. Still, they always seemed to be in a rush to make it in time for the train to school.

Scarlett dragged her coat on and they hurried along the road – with Poppy still eating her banana from breakfast.

"That was close – oh, the train's late," Mum said, looking up at the screen as they passed the ticket office. "Poor Poppy, I could have let you finish that banana at home. Oh, sweetheart, you've got it all down your front." She pulled out some wipes from her bag and started trying to clean Poppy up while Scarlett slumped sleepily on to one of the benches on the platform.

She was peering down the railway tracks, looking for the train, when something soft nudged her leg, just

above her sock. Scarlett jumped, for a horrible moment thinking it was a spider – she really didn't like spiders. But when she looked down, there was a small, dark, furry face staring back at her. A kitten! A tiny black-and-orange kitten.



"Hey…" Scarlett whispered. "What are you doing under there?"

The kitten mewed – a squeaky, demanding noise as if it wanted something. Then it ducked back further underneath the bench, looking startled, and Scarlett realized the train was coming.

"Oh, I wish we didn't have to go," Scarlett whispered as she scrambled up from the bench and headed after Mum and Poppy. "Bye, kitten. I really hope I see you again…"



Scarlett kept remembering the kitten all day at school. She'd only had a very quick glimpse of it before the train

scared it back into the shadows but she was sure she'd never seen a cat with markings like that before. Its face had been half gingery and half black, a bit like a mask.

When they got back to the station that afternoon, Scarlett looked eagerly across the tracks to the other platform, hoping to see the kitten peeping out from under the bench again. But all she could see were pigeons.

"Are you OK, Scarlett?" Mum called to her. "Did you see someone from school?"

"No, I was looking for the kitten," Scarlett explained. "The one I saw this morning. With the orange-and-black fur."



"Oh, yes. Tortoiseshell, that's what they're called. I wonder where she's come from – she can't live at the station. Let's try and be early tomorrow in case she's around."

Scarlett nodded eagerly. "Please! She's so pretty, Mum. I want you to see her."



When they reached the station the next morning, there were only a few people scattered along the platform as the next train wasn't due for a few minutes. Scarlett hurried over to the bench where she'd seen the kitten the day before, and Mum followed with the pushchair. Poppy was leaning out to look too – Scarlett didn't think her little sister knew what they were looking for but she was definitely excited.

"Oh…" Scarlett sighed sadly. "It's not here."

But Mum laughed. "Look behind you."

Poppy was pointing and bouncing up

and down in the pushchair. "Meow!" she squeaked and Scarlett swung round.

The kitten was gazing out at her from the weeds growing along the edge of the railings. It was half hidden in the plants, its dark, gingery fur melting into the shadows.



"Hello…" Scarlett slowly stretched out one hand and the kitten leaned forwards a little to sniff her fingers and then nudge its chin against them gently. "You're in disguise," she whispered. "That's very clever."

"I love the little gingery striped tail," Mum said. "Is there a name tag on that

collar, Scarlett? Does it say what the kitten's called?"

Scarlett rubbed the top of the kitten's head and tried to look at the collar but all she could see was a phone number. "I don't think so… I can't tell if it's a girl or a boy kitten either."

"I think she has to be a girl," Mum said thoughtfully. "Gran's old cat was tortoiseshell. Do you remember Patches? You might not have been old enough. Anyway, I'm sure Gran told me that tortoiseshell cats are almost always girls."

The kitten was getting a bit more confident. She padded out to wind herself around Scarlett's ankles and now they could see her properly. "She's got black whiskers on her dark fur side,

and white ones on the ginger side," Scarlett said, laughing. "I didn't even know cats could do that."

"Oh, Scarlett, the train's coming."

"Stay back there," Scarlett told the kitten. She supposed the little cat probably knew that trains were dangerous and she shouldn't get near the edge of the platform, but she was still very little.

They hurried on to the train and Scarlett stood against a window, looking out to check everything was OK. The kitten had tucked herself safely away in the weeds at the edge of the railings again and Scarlett breathed a sigh of relief.

From then on, Mum and Poppy and Scarlett looked out for the kitten every

day. Other passengers at the station made a fuss of her too but Scarlett was sure that the kitten loved them best. She always came padding along the platform to say hello and she'd lost a lot of her shyness.

"She likes you, doesn't she?" one of the station staff said, a couple of weeks later. Tony, it said on his name badge.

"I think so," Scarlett agreed shyly. "Do you know who she belongs to? Does she live at the station?"

Tony reached down to tickle the kitten under her chin. "I don't know, to be honest. She just turned up a while ago. She doesn't sleep here though. I think she lives in one of the houses just down the road, I've seen her heading into the gardens along there."

He grinned at Scarlett and pulled something out of his pocket – a crinkly foil packet. "Don't tell anyone…" he whispered, scattering a few cat treats in front of the kitten, who snaffled them eagerly. "I shouldn't feed someone else's cat but she always looks so hungry."

"I was worried she was a bit thin!" Scarlett agreed.

"Here." Tony held out the packet and dropped a couple of the little crunchy treats into Scarlett's hand. "You have a go. She loves them."

Scarlett crouched down and held out the treats, and the kitten nuzzled into her hand to gobble them up. It was the best feeling, that velvety little chin tickling against her palm. Scarlett couldn't help laughing.



The kitten's ears pricked up as she felt the rumbling along the tracks that meant another train was coming. She'd seen so many of them now, she wasn't scared any more. But she still liked to make sure she was tucked well out of the way. Some of the trains didn't stop,

swooshing straight through the station in a wild rush of air that ruffled her fur and threatened to lift her off her paws. Even the trains that did stop were noisy and then crowds of people would pour out on to the platform, not always watching where they were putting their feet.

The kitten skittered away to hide under a bench, watching as the train pulled in to the platform across the tracks. She was almost sure that this was the train the girl came back on. It was always about the same time and she'd seen the girl's mum and little sister in the pushchair not that long before.

She would see them when the train pulled out of the platform and then a few minutes later they'd come out of the

doors that opened by the stairs. The girl would stroke her and fuss over her and maybe even give her a little something to eat. The kitten was hungry and no one was at home to let her in and feed her. Her owners put her out in the morning and usually didn't come home till late – she was always starving by then.

Passengers were starting to hurry down the stairs now and the kitten crept along the side of the ticket office, where she had a good view of the lift. The doors slid open and there they were. They were looking for her too, she could tell. The kitten darted along the platform, mewing eagerly, and rubbed against the girl's ankles.

Her loud, rumbling purrs sounded just like a train.