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Jo Clarke is an award-winning book blogger and primary school librarian. Her hugely successful blog, BookloverJo, keeps her active within the children's book community and she has been involved in judging the British Book Awards and the Alligator's Mouth Book Awards. She is the author of The Travelling School Mysteries and this is her third book. **@bookloverJo**



Becka Moor is a children's book illustrator living in Manchester. She studied at Glyndwr University, graduating in 2012. Since then, she has worked on a variety of young fiction, non-fiction and picture books. **@BeckaMoor**

LIBBY
AND THE
MANHATTAN MYSTERY

JO CLARKE

ILLUSTRATED BY BECKA MOOR



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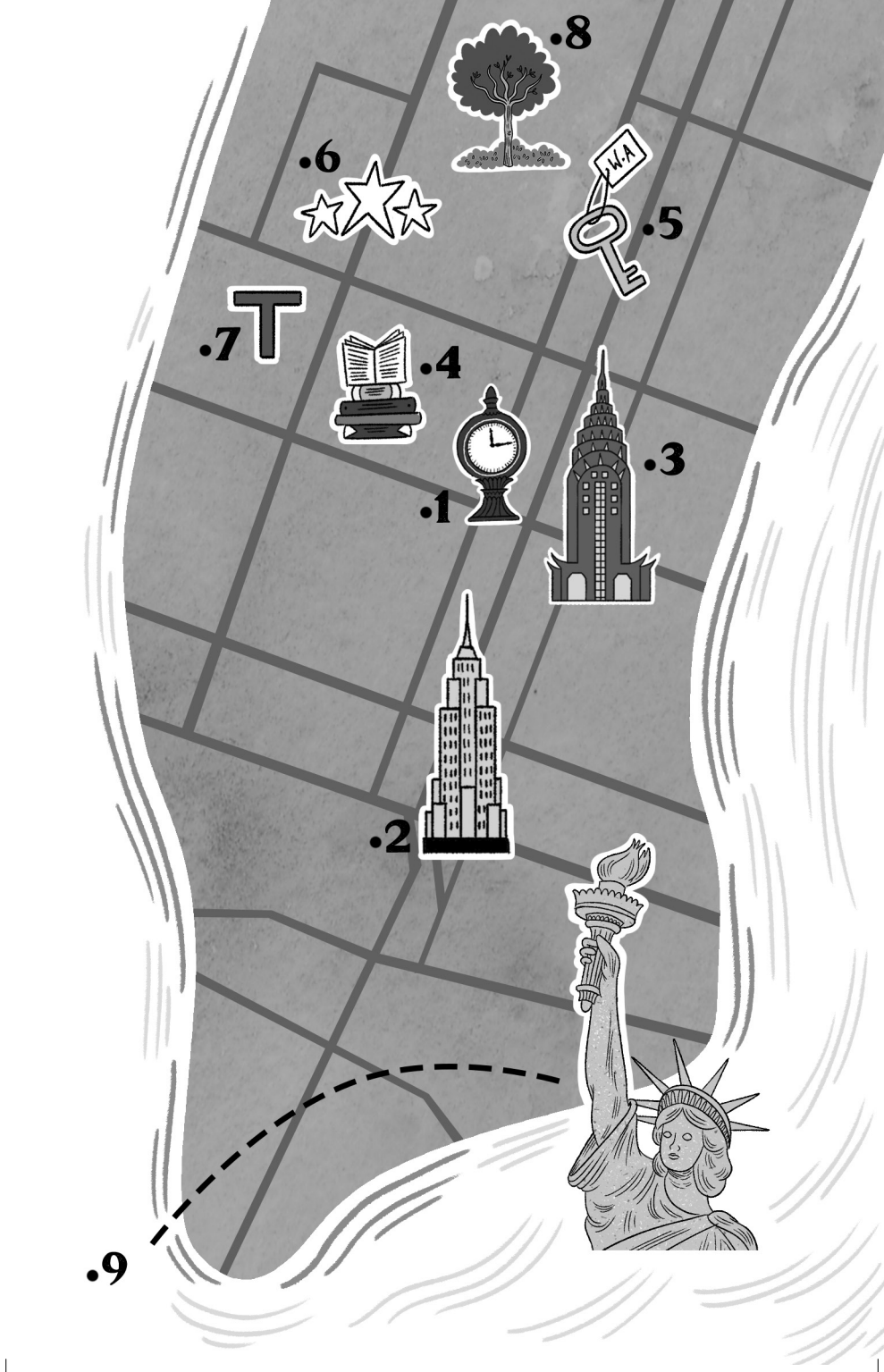
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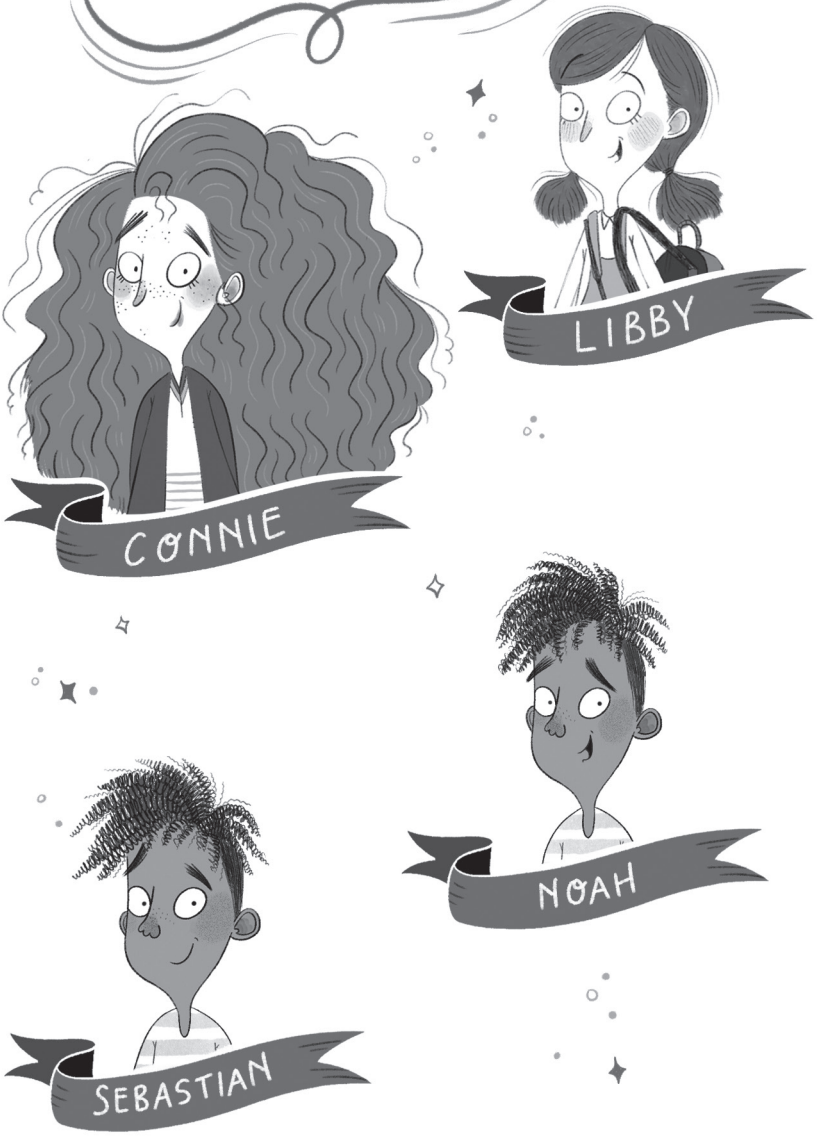


MAP OF MANHATTAN

1. GRAND CENTRAL STATION
2. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING
3. CHRYSLER BUILDING
4. NEW YORK LIBRARY
5. WALDORF ASTORIA
6. BROADWAY
7. TIMES SQUARE
8. CENTRAL PARK
9. STATUE OF LIBERTY


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.5
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MEET THE CHARACTERS




AUNT AGATHA
MISS KHATUN
ANASTASIA
ELOISE



Chapter 1
The Big Apple

A screech of brakes confirmed that the plane was finally on the ground. They were in New York at last. Libby had been so disappointed when her aunt's plans to visit last term had been disrupted by a flood at their school, but it looked like fate had given them a helping hand. If they hadn't had to stay in Edinburgh, they would never have managed to solve the mystery of the missing paintings at her best friend Connie's home and saved her family from ruin. It wouldn't have been the same coming to New York without Connie.

After what felt like forever, they made it through the baggage-claim area and headed towards the taxi rank by the automatic doors. She was so excited at the thought of travelling in one of New York's famous

yellow taxis. Although it was still dark, she could see a whole fleet of them waiting in line outside the arrivals gate. Libby pointed to show Connie, but she wasn't paying attention. She'd stopped a few paces behind Libby and her aunt, Miss Mousedale, and was staring straight ahead. Following her stare, Libby saw a man wearing a grey suit and a cap, holding up a piece of paper.

'That's strange,' said Connie. 'Why has that man got a sign with my name on? I thought we were getting a taxi to school.'

'This is most irregular.' Miss Mousedale looked puzzled. 'Let me find out what's going on. I really don't need any hold ups today!'

Miss Mousedale didn't look impressed as she strode off in his direction. Libby watched carefully as they talked. Who was that man, and why had he come to collect Connie? Before she could allow her imagination to get completely carried away, her aunt returned.

'Apparently, your godmother has arranged for us to be collected,' said Miss Mousedale disapprovingly. 'I do wish she'd let us know; I do not like surprises.'

Libby and Connie tried to stifle their giggles. Miss Mousedale got cross at the strangest of things. They

followed the man towards the car park where a long black car was waiting.

'Your carriage awaits,' he said, opening the door.



Libby couldn't believe her eyes: it was an actual real-life limousine! A glamorous lady with almost white blonde hair and the biggest eyelashes Libby had ever seen stepped out and smiled. For once she was lost for words.

'Surprise!' the lady purred. 'Connie, look how much you've grown; I barely recognised you.'

'Eloise, I can't believe you're here.' Connie's face lit up and she threw herself into the lady's arms. 'This is my best friend in the whole world, Libby. Oh, and her aunt, Miss Mousedale. And this is my godmother, Eloise.'

'I was hardly going to let you go all the way to the city in an awful cab,' Eloise declared. 'You must come to my hotel for breakfast. I insist.'

Libby was confused. Connie had said her godmother was Scottish but there wasn't a hint of a Scots accent, just a very lilting American one. All that time she had spent in Hollywood had clearly changed her. Libby

couldn't help but feel in awe of such a famous person. She had only ever seen Eloise in movies before, and now she was standing right in front of them. New York was already proving to be very exciting!

'Is that okay, Miss Mousedale?' Connie asked nervously. 'I know you wanted to get to school as soon as possible.'

Libby crossed her fingers hoping that her aunt wouldn't say no. She really did hate being put on the spot.

'It would be churlish of me to refuse,' said Miss Mousedale. 'And I must confess, I'm rather peckish after that long flight.'

Libby was surprised at her aunt's reaction, but she jumped in the limousine before she could change her mind, pulling Connie in behind her.

When everyone was in the limo, the driver pulled away. Eloise gasped and she tapped on the window.

'Could you stop, please?' she asked the driver.

Libby spotted a tall man with dark hair that they'd just driven past. He was wearing a charcoal suit and carrying a small bag.

Eloise pressed a button and the window wound down. She leaned out.

'Count Alvarez, is that you?'



The man smiled. 'Eloise, what a charming coincidence. What are you doing here?'

'I'm just picking up my goddaughter and her friends; they're visiting from the UK! Are you waiting for someone?'

'Unfortunately, yes. I was meant to meet my driver here but he has a flat tyre, so he's running late. I guess I'll just go back to arrivals and take a taxi.'

'Oh no. I can't possibly let you do that. You must come with us; I insist,' Eloise said. 'We have plenty of room.'

The Count hesitated and looked around as if he was trying to see if his driver was going to appear after all. 'Well, if you insist. I would hate to offend.'

'I'm glad to hear it. Where's the rest of your luggage?' Eloise asked. 'Do you need to collect it?'

'It was just a short trip, so I only have this.' He held up his bag.

The driver opened the boot and made room for the Count's bag. Count Alvarez handed over a card with an address to the driver, who nodded and drove off.

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Libby stared out of the window. She was expecting New York to be full of towering skyscrapers, but all

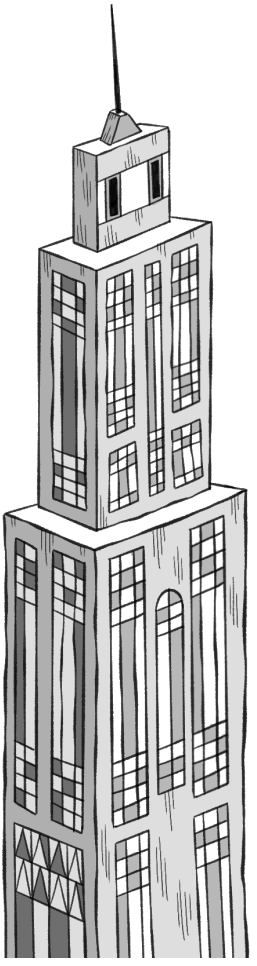
she could see as they whizzed along in the limo was ordinary neighbourhoods. Then, as they crossed over a bridge, Libby got her first glimpse of a skyline that looked familiar. She'd seen pictures in one of her mum's travel guides. Finally: this was the New York she was expecting. The buildings reached up and seemed to almost touch the clouds. Behind them the sun was just rising, giving the city an orange glow.

'Connie, look,' pointed Libby. 'Isn't it beautiful?'

Connie grinned. 'I've never seen anything like it in my life. It's so breath-taking.'

'And loud, no doubt,' said Miss Mousedale, clutching her bag close to her. 'It makes Edinburgh look positively rural. I hope you're both ready for all the noise and chaos.'

'Let's hope New York is ready for us,' Libby laughed. She was completely captivated by the sight. She had spent years travelling the world with her mum because of her work as a photographer,



but this was her first trip to New York, and she was determined to enjoy every minute.

Even though it was early in the morning, the city wasn't asleep. Shops were beginning to open. Shutters were being rolled up; a sign proclaiming 'the best coffee and bagel in NYC' sat alongside buckets of fresh flowers that were being put out on the pavement. Horns blared as their driver zipped in and out of the traffic, and the sirens of police cars rang out somewhere in the distance.

'I think we're in Times Square,' shouted Connie. 'Everything is so … bright and loud.'

Most of the buildings were covered with screens flashing adverts for shows. It was a multitude of colours and lights. Libby gazed up at the buildings in wonder; they were so enormous you couldn't even see the tops of them.

'What d'ya think?' asked their driver. 'Pretty impressive, right? I bet you don't have all this in your fancy London town.'

Libby loved her home city, but she couldn't help but agree. New York was something else. 'It's incredible.' She felt a tingle of excitement. Hopefully New York would turn out to be as exciting as it looked.