For Eileen—a kind and loving wife, mum, and Nana. We'll always remember how brightly you shone - P.H.

For my fellow foxes, Jessica and Nicola - J.L.

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP
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First published in 2023
First published in this edition 2024

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

ISBN: 978-0-19-278761-3

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in China

Paper used in the production of this book is a natural,
recyclable product made from wood grown in sustainable forests.
The manufacturing process conforms to the environmental
regulations of the country of origin.

Kitty

and the Snowball Bandit



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Chapter 1

‘Come and look, Pumpkin!

It must have snowed last night.’ Kitty pulled back her bedroom curtain and gazed out of the frosty window.

A thick blanket of snow covered the flats and the houses, glittering in the

Kitty had a special secret that only a few people knew. She had cat-like superpowers, just like her mum, and she could climb and leap and balance as easily as a cat. She had super senses too, and she often used her night vision and cat-like hearing when she went on night-time adventures with her cat crew. Her favourite part of having superpowers was being able to talk to animals. Kitty had rescued Pumpkin from terrible danger on her very first mission, and they had been best friends ever since.

After breakfast, Dad took the wooden sledge out of the shed. Mum was still asleep, so they left her a note and set off for the park.

Dad pulled Max, Kitty's little brother, on the sledge. Kitty walked behind them, carrying Pumpkin in her arms. The deep snow crunched under her bright-orange boots and her breath came out like a misty cloud. Every tree and fence was lined with snow, and everywhere sparkled.



Kitty gazed around, bright-eyed. 'Look how pretty everything is! Aren't you glad you came with us, Pumpkin?'

'The snow smells cold!' Pumpkin frowned at the snowy path.

'Let's make some footprints together,' Kitty suggested. 'It's a lot of fun!'

'All right—I'll try.' Pumpkin jumped down from Kitty's arms and padded gingerly across the snow, leaving a trail of tiny pawprints. Then he tried

some bigger leaps, and his whiskers twitched happily.

'Look at me!' he meowed, waving his stripy tail. 'I can do snow jumps.'

Dad pulled the sledge into the park. 'Here we are! Shall we make a snowman?' He began rolling a large ball of snow to make the snowman's body while Kitty and Max shaped a smaller ball for its head.

They found sticks for the snowman's arms and little round stones for its eyes and mouth. Kitty wound her scarf around the snowman's neck and stood back to admire him. Suddenly she heard a joyful meowing behind her, and three cats came scampering down the hill.

Figaro, a black cat with a white-tipped tail, came first, followed by Pixie and Katsumi—the other members of Kitty's cat crew.



‘Hi, Figaro!’ called Kitty. ‘Hello Pixie and Katsumi! Do you like our snowman?’

‘It looks splendid, Kitty!’ said Figaro.

‘Can we make a snowcat too—with pointed ears and a nice long tail?’ Pixie said eagerly, shaking the snow off her fluffy white coat.

‘That’s a great idea!’ said Kitty.

So Pixie, Pumpkin, and Kitty began moulding and patting the snow into the shape of a snowcat. Katsumi and Figaro padded around making pawprints while Dad took Max up the hill to have a go on the sledge. The snowcat looked beautiful, with an elegant tail and long whiskers made from sticks.



‘Finished!’ said Kitty, smiling. ‘Have you had fun today, Pumpkin?’

‘Meow!’ Pumpkin nodded eagerly. ‘And I didn’t get cold at all.’

Pixie smoothed the snowcat’s ears. ‘This has to be the best snowcat ever! Now I’m ready to go home and curl up somewhere warm.’

Later that evening, Kitty set off for the Winter Fair with Mum, Dad, and Max. The sky was growing darker, and stars twinkled above the snowy rooftops.

The city streets were criss-crossed with footprints, and icicles hung over the doorways.



The fairground was next to the river. With her super senses, Kitty could already detect the scent of hot chocolate and warm cinnamon rolls. There was a band playing festive songs, and Max started dancing to the beat!

Kitty skipped round the next corner, and her heart began to race. Twinkly star-shaped lights and bright streamers were strung across the fairground. There were dozens of stalls selling everything from winter jumpers to teddy bears. A large space was set aside for an ice sculpting competition and next to that was a smooth ice rink.

Dad bought them all mugs of hot chocolate with extra marshmallows on top. Sipping her delicious drink, Kitty gazed around the fair. Everyone was laughing and having a wonderful time.



‘Shall we try ice-skating—just you and me?’ Mum suggested.

Kitty’s eyes shone. ‘Yes, please! It looks fun.’



Kitty and Mum went to borrow some ice skates, and soon they were gliding around on the little ice rink. Dad and Max waved to them from the side. With her amazing sense of balance, Kitty could spin and twirl as fast as a snowflake. She only wished Pumpkin and the cat crew were here to see her!

Suddenly, a large snowball struck Kitty's shoulder, making her wobble. She recovered her balance and looked round in surprise. Where had that snowball come from?

Then a grey-haired woman dropped her drink with a squeal. 'Who threw that snowball at me?' she cried. 'I've spilled hot chocolate everywhere!'

Kitty frowned. It seemed very unfair to knock someone's drink out of their hands. She wondered who might have done it, but she couldn't see anyone making snowballs.



'Are you all right?' asked Mum.

'A snowball hit me, but I'm OK,' explained Kitty. 'Maybe it was just an accident.'

'That's strange!' Mum looked around. 'All right, let's give our skates back. Dad and Max will be waiting.'

As Kitty glided to the edge of the rink, two more snowballs landed close by. Then the band suddenly stopped playing as one of the trumpets was also hit by a lump of snow.

'There's a Snowball Bandit around here!' the trumpet player announced over the loudspeaker. 'Be careful, everyone.'

'I don't like snowballs very much!' said the grey-haired woman. 'I think I'll just go home.'



Kitty peered around the fairground, using her super senses. Who was throwing all the snowballs? Were they hiding somewhere? Another snowball whizzed through the air, hitting her welly boot. She spun round super-fast, but she still couldn't see who might have thrown it.

Dad lifted Max onto his shoulders. 'It's getting late! I think we should head back.'

'Yes, it's time to go!' said Kitty's mum. 'But I hope someone talks to that Snowball Bandit soon, before they ruin the rest of the fair.'

Kitty looked around the fairground one more time. Lots of other people were going home too. Who was throwing snowballs and spoiling the Winter Fair? She wished she'd been able to stop them!