

*Lost in  
the Snow*

For Sammy and Marble,  
and for the original Rosie

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# Chapter One



Rosebridge Farm was a beautiful place in the autumn. The leaves on the big oak tree at the corner of the farmyard had turned golden, and every so often a few of them would whirl down to the ground and give the hens a fright. The farm was a lovely old place, and the Moffat family had been dairy farmers there for over a hundred years.

There were stables, and a big barn, and a beautiful old farmhouse that looked cosy and inviting in the autumn sunshine.

But today no one at the farm was noticing how lovely it all was. Mrs Moffat and her son Ben were in the office, looking at the accounts, and worrying. It had been a difficult year, and money was tight. Outside in the yard, Sara, Mrs Moffat's thirteen-year-old daughter, was trying to give the hen house a makeover. "Ow!" she yelped, as she hit herself with the hammer for the fourth time. "Sorry, chicks," she said to the hens, who were scratching and pecking round her feet. "You're just going to have to wait for Ben to come and help me." She put down the

hammer and headed off to the farmhouse, but as she passed the stables something made her stop.

What was that funny squeaking noise? Sara peered over the half-door at Gus, their old pony. He gazed back, and snorted, shaking himself all over. Then he nosed down at a pile of straw practically underneath him. His face seemed to be saying that he wasn't complaining, but really, of all the places...

"Rosie! You've had the kittens!" exclaimed Sara excitedly. She leaned so far over the door she nearly fell into the stable. Rosie the farm cat glared at her. "Sorry, sorry! I promise I won't come in and disturb you. I just want to have a quick look."

The kittens were snuggled up next to Rosie in Gus's bed of straw. They were tripping over each other, as they nuzzled gently at their mother, still blind and helpless.

"Oh, they're gorgeous, Rosie! So how many are there? Two black ones, a ginger – oh no, two gingers. I wish you'd hold still, kittens, I'm counting. And a tabby – oh. Oh dear." Sara's delighted voice flattened. The tabby kitten was so tiny – much, much smaller than her brothers and sisters – and she was hardly moving.

"Oh, I do hope you'll be all right!" Sara whispered worriedly, as one of the others climbed over it. But she had a horrible feeling that the tiny thing was just too small to survive...



Even though Sara had lived on the farm all her life, and she knew that this sort of thing just happened sometimes, her eyes filled with tears.



The littlest kitten was so sweet – it had really long fur and looked like a little bundle of fluff! As she watched, it got trodden on again, and opened its mouth in a tiny, almost silent mew of protest. Sara wiped her sleeve across her eyes sadly.

She took one last look at the kittens – at least the other four looked fit and healthy – and dashed off to tell her mum and Ben.

“Rosie’s had her kittens!” she called, as she opened the kitchen door.

Mrs Moffat popped her head round the door of the office. “Oh lovely! How many are there?”

“Five, but—”

“Five more mouths to feed,” a gloomy voice sighed. Ben was at agricultural college, training in farm management. He loved Rosebridge Farm, all the Moffats did, but he hated it that things weren’t going well. The farm was hardly making enough money to live on at the moment, and Ben was counting every penny.

“Oh, they’re only tiny mouths, Ben! We can feed five little kittens!” laughed his mother.

“I think it might only be four soon,” said Sara. “The little tabby one – it’s so small. I’m not sure it’ll make it.”

“Oh dear,” said Mrs Moffat, jumping up and coming out to the kitchen. “Let’s take a look, Sara, where are they?”

Sara led her mum and Ben out to see the new family, hoping that her mum would say she was making a fuss about nothing. But Mrs Moffat looked at the littlest kitten sadly. “I think you might be right, Sara. It’s too little. What a pity.”

“Please don’t call her an it, Mum, I’m sure she’s a little girl kitten.”

“I know what you mean, she’s so pretty and delicate, with those lovely brown and black markings.” Mrs Moffat sighed.

“Isn’t there anything we can do?” Sara asked, tears filling her eyes again.

“Well, I suppose we could try her with some of that special kitten milk out of an eye-dropper,” her mum said doubtfully. “That’s if Rosie will let us. But Sara, listen, you mustn’t let yourself get too attached to her. I’m really sorry, but her chances just aren’t good.”



Over the next couple of weeks, Sara wondered if Rosie had heard them saying that the tabby kitten wasn’t likely to survive. Rosie was a stubborn old cat, and she seemed determined to prove everyone wrong. She always made sure that the tabby kitten got an extra turn suckling, and by the time the kittens were three weeks old and

starting to explore the stable, the littlest kitten was still little, but she was catching up. Rosie was very protective of them, but she did let Sara and her mum in to feed the tabby, and cuddle them all every so often. The littlest kitten fought for more than her fair share of cuddles, and would lie in Sara's arms, purring a purr that seemed far too loud for such a tiny creature.

It wasn't long before the bigger kittens got bored with exploring the stable and playing tag round Gus's hooves, and started trying to escape outside.

One morning the two ginger boy kittens hid behind the stable door. As soon as Sara opened it, they shot out into the farmyard. They seemed a bit

surprised by how much world there was out there, but they certainly weren't going back in. Rosie seemed to realize that she couldn't keep them all shut up any longer, so she shooed the other kittens out too. But the tabby cried, and hid behind Rosie – outside was just too big and scary.

Rosie nudged the little kitten to the door, where she mewed miserably, her tiny paws scrabbling as she fought to get back into the safety of the cosy stable.

“Rosie, don't be such a bully!” said Sara, scooping up the trembling kitten. “Poor little ball of fluff, she's scared.”

The kitten snuggled into Sara's fleece – this was a much better place to be. And she'd heard that word “fluff”

again. Everyone seemed to say it when they saw her. *Perhaps Fluff is my name?* she thought happily.



Sara, Ben and Mrs Moffat had decided not to give any of the kittens names, as they knew that they wouldn't be at the farm for very long. As soon as the kittens were eight weeks old, they'd be old enough to leave Rosie, and find new homes.

But it was hard not to call the little one Fluff. Sara gave in first, and Ben and her mum told her off about it.

"I told you not to get attached to any of them!" her mum scolded. "If you give her a name you'll want her to stay, and you know we can't afford it."

"Eating us out of house and home as it is," muttered Ben, stroking the little kitten under the chin, and trying not to grin as her massive purr rumbled round the stable.