

The Kitten
Nobody
Wanted

For everyone remembering a much-missed cat

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Chapter One



“Oh, Mia, look! I told you Mrs Johnston had a new cat. Isn’t she gorgeous? So fluffy!” Mia’s mum stroked the little black cat, who was sitting proudly on Mrs Johnston’s front wall.

Mia’s best friend Emily tickled the purring cat under the chin. “She’s so lovely!”

Mia's mum looked over at Mia hopefully, then sighed. She hadn't even glanced up as Mum and Emily petted the cat. She was staring firmly at her school shoes as she marched on down the road. It was as if she hadn't heard.

Mum and Emily exchanged worried looks, and hurried after her. Emily lived a few doors down from Mia, and the girls usually walked to school together. Their mums and Mia's gran took it in turns to go with them, now that Emily's big sister Leah had started secondary school. Gran lived in a little flat at the side of Mia's house, and looked after Mia when her parents were working. She'd moved in with them a few years ago, when she'd been ill and it had been difficult for her to live on her own.

"See you tomorrow, Mia!" Emily called, as she turned into her drive.

"Bye! Call me if you get stuck on that homework!" Mia was very good at maths, and Emily wasn't. Emily had been moaning about their maths homework all the way back from school.

Mia flung off her coat and hurried upstairs before Mum could start going on about Mrs Johnston's gorgeous cat again. She could hear her mum asking her if she was OK, if she wanted a drink or a chat, but she ignored her.

Mia just didn't want to hear. She'd never realized before how many cats there were in her road, or on the way to school. Now that she couldn't bear to see them, there seemed to be cats everywhere.

She slumped down on her bed, and looked sadly at the navy blue fleece blanket spread over her duvet at the end. It had a pattern of little cat faces scattered over it – and there were still ginger hairs clinging on to it here and there. Sandy had slept on it every night, for as long as Mia could remember. She still woke up in the middle of the night expecting her old cat to be there – sometimes she even reached down to stroke him, waiting for his sleepy purr as he felt her move. It was so hard to believe that he was really gone.

She looked at the photo on her windowsill. It had been taken a couple of months earlier, at the beginning of the summer holidays, just a few weeks

before Sandy died. He was looking thin, and they'd taken him to the vet's, but that day he'd been enjoying the late summer sun in the garden, and Mia had been sure he was getting better. Looking back now, she realized that he hadn't been jumping and pouncing and chasing the butterflies like he usually did, just lying quietly in the sun. But she hadn't wanted to believe that there was anything wrong with him.



Tears stung her eyes as she stroked the glass over the photo, wishing she had the real Sandy snuggled up on her lap.

How could Mum keep pointing out other cats, and expecting her to want to stop and stroke them? Dad had even suggested going to the cat rescue centre to look for a kitten! Mia didn't want a kitten, ever. She was never going to replace her beautiful Sandy.

Mum was calling her from downstairs, asking if she wanted a snack. Brushing the tears away, Mia carefully straightened Sandy's blanket, and went down to the kitchen.



She could tell that Mum was watching her worriedly as she ate her apple. It only made her feel worse.

“Shall I go and fill up the bird feeder?” she asked, wanting an excuse to leave the room. Mia knew Mum was only trying to help, but she really wasn't, and any minute now she was going to start talking about kittens again, or getting a rabbit, like she'd suggested yesterday.

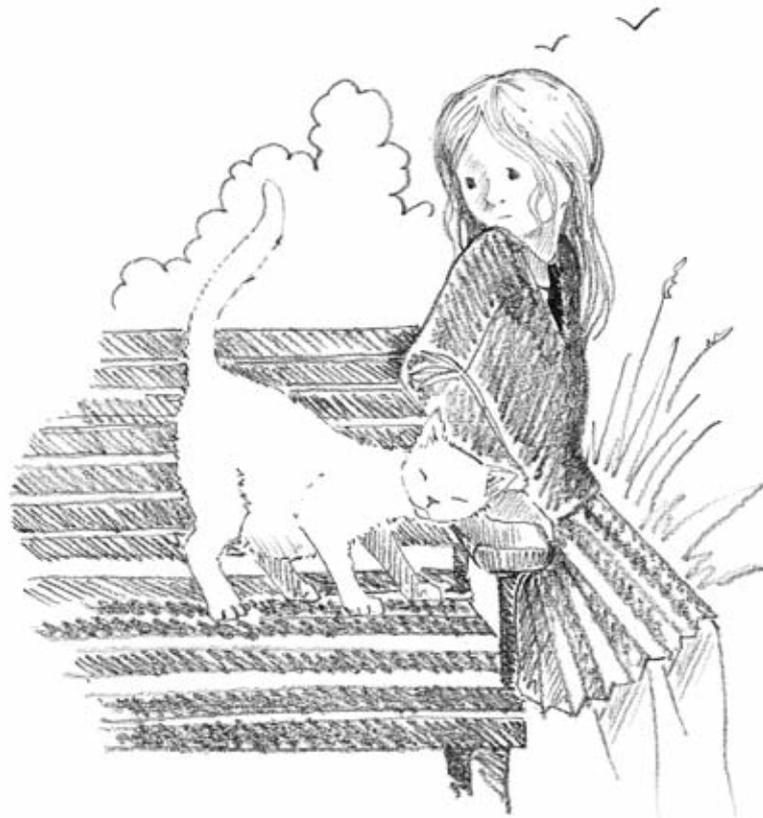
Mia grabbed the bag of bird food from the cupboard, and let herself out of the back door, taking a deep breath of relief. A blackbird skittered out of her way as she went over to refill the feeder, and she murmured to it soothingly as she unhooked the wire case.

“It’s all right, I’ll be gone in a minute. And I’ll probably drop bits, you can come and peck them up.” She poured in the seed, and then hung up the feeder and perched on the arm of the bench, shivering a little in the autumn sun. She didn’t want to go back inside just yet.

All of a sudden, a damp nose butted her hand, and Mia jumped, a strange, silly hope flooding into her.

But when she turned round, it wasn’t her beautiful Sandy playing tricks on her. It was a pretty, plump white cat, with blue eyes, and Mia recognized her. Silky, her friend Emily’s cat.

“Hi, Silky,” she whispered. “You look a bit round, pusscat. Emily needs to stop giving you so many treats.”



Silky rubbed up against her affectionately. Cats always liked Mia, and Silky knew her anyway, as Mia spent loads of time over at Emily’s house. Sandy had known Emily too, although he’d always chased Silky if she came into his garden.

This garden.