

The
Missing
Kitten

For Emily and the gorgeous Rosie Bumble

For more information about Holly Webb visit:
www.holly-webb.com

STRIPES PUBLISHING
An imprint of Little Tiger Press
1 The Coda Centre, 189 Munster Road,
London SW6 6AW

A paperback original
First published in Great Britain in 2013

Text copyright © Holly Webb, 2013
Illustrations copyright © Sophy Williams, 2013

ISBN: 978-1-84715-366-1

The right of Holly Webb and Sophy Williams to be
identified as the author and illustrator of this work
respectively has been asserted by them in accordance
with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

All rights reserved.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not,
by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or
otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent
in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it
is published and without a similar condition, including this
condition, being imposed upon the subsequent purchaser.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library.

Printed and bound in the UK.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Chapter One



Scarlett looked around her new bedroom with delight. It was huge! And as it was up in the roof of the cottage, it was a really interesting shape, all ups and downs. There was a gorgeous window as well, with a curly handle to open it, and a big, wide windowsill she could sit on. Her old bedroom had been tiny, and a very

boring squarish sort of shape.

“Good, isn’t it?” Jackson, her big brother, put his head round the door. He had the bedroom next to hers, which was basically the other half of the roof space. Mum and Dad had said that their bedrooms used to be the attic.

“I love it,” Scarlett said happily. “The window’s the best thing! I love seeing all the fields and trees, and look! Cows! Out of my bedroom window!”

Jackson chuckled. “Cows not cars. Now *that* makes a change! Yeah, it’s really good. Except everything’s a bit far away.”

Scarlett nodded slowly. “There *is* a shop in the village,” she reminded him.

Jackson made a face. “Yeah, one shop! And a blacksmith. How weird is that?”

“And the school’s in the village too,” Scarlett added, very quietly. “I wish we didn’t have to change schools.” That was the thing she was least happy about with their move to the countryside. She was really going to miss her old school, and her friends. Lucy and Ella had said they’d come and stay in the next holidays, but that was a long time away. And meanwhile, she was going to start at a school where she didn’t know anyone, and she certainly didn’t have any friends.

“It’ll be all right,” Jackson told her cheerfully, and Scarlett sighed. He wasn’t worried. He never was. Jackson was really sporty, and he found it very easy to make friends. And yet he didn’t show off, so people just wanted to hang

out with him. Scarlett wished she knew how he did it.

“Did you hear that rustling noise?” Jackson pointed up at the ceiling. “I bet there are mice in all that thatch. Remember to tell Mum and Dad about that, Scarlett. You need to start working on them again about a kitten, now that we’re here. They said maybe after we’d moved, didn’t they?”

Scarlett grinned at him. “I know! I thought I’d maybe give them a day though, before I started asking. Let them get some boxes unpacked first...” She looked up too. “Do you really think there are mice?”

Jackson gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling. “Probably. It sounds like it to me. Unless it’s a rat, of course.”

“Uuurgh! OK, I’ll ask Mum now. No way am I living in a house with a rat!” Scarlett shuddered.

“I’m with you on that,” Jackson grinned. “Rats can be pretty big, you know. Bigger than a kitten, anyway.” He made a ratty face, pulling his lips back to show big ratty teeth.

“Stop it!” Scarlett cried. “Maybe we can get a grown-up cat then. I don’t mind if it isn’t a little kitten. I’d just love to have any sort of cat, and they did say maybe we could. You’ll help, won’t you? You’ll ask too?”

Jackson nodded. “Yeah. Although I don’t fancy coming down in the morning to find a row of dead mice on the doormat. That’s what Sam says his cat does.”

Scarlett looked worried. “I think I’d rather have a cat that just scares the mice away...”



Scarlett started her kitten campaign while everyone was sitting down eating lunch. It felt really odd seeing their old kitchen table in a completely different kitchen.



“It’s so quiet,” Mum said happily, looking out of the open window. “I don’t think I’ve heard a single car since we got here. I love it that we’re down at the end of the lane.”

“I keep thinking there’s something missing,” Dad admitted. “But it’ll be great once we’re used to it. And the air smells amazing.”

Jackson sniffed loudly. “That’s cowpat, Dad.”

Scarlett made a face at him. She didn’t want him distracting Mum and Dad – this was a great opportunity to mention a kitten. She took a deep breath. “It’s not a bit like Laurence Road, is it?” she said, thinking about their old home. “With all the busy traffic...” She swallowed, and glanced

hopefully from Mum to Dad and back again. “You wouldn’t worry about a cat getting run over here, would you?”

Dad snorted with laughter and turned to Mum. “You win, Laura. She lasted more than an hour.”

Scarlett blinked. “What do you mean?”

Mum reached out an arm and hugged her round the shoulder. “Dad and I were talking about it last night, Scarlett. We wondered how long you’d be able to wait before you asked about a cat. I said that I thought it would be once we’d settled in a bit, and Dad said you’d ask the moment we got here. So I won, and now he has to cook dinner tonight!”

“Simple. Fish and chips,” Dad said, taking a huge bite of sandwich.

Mum smiled at him. “You do realize it’s a twenty-minute drive to the nearest fish and chip shop now, don’t you?”

“You mean you were just waiting for me to ask? So can we have one?” Scarlett said hopefully, eager to get back to talking about kittens.

Mum nodded slowly. “Yes. But we can’t go off to an animal shelter tomorrow – we need to do some unpacking, and besides, I haven’t a clue where the nearest one is.”

“I could find out!” Scarlett said eagerly. “It’s just – it would be really nice to have time to get to know the kitten before school starts. We’ve only got two weeks, and then me and Jackson won’t be at home for most of the day.”

Dad nodded. “I know, Scarlett, but I

don't think we'll be able to find you a kitten right now. I know it would be lovely to have one while you're still at home. But it won't be a huge problem if you're at school. Mum'll be at work, but I'll be at home working, so the kitten won't be lonely. And your new school's really close. You'll be home in ten minutes."

Scarlett nodded. That was another thing that was different, being able to walk to school. Mum and Dad had even said she and Jackson could walk on their own, if they wanted, as it was all along footpaths.

"I suppose." Scarlett nodded. "So we can really have a cat? You actually mean it? We can look for one?"

"Promise," Dad told her solemnly.

Scarlett beamed at him. She could come home from school and play with her cat. Her own cat! She'd wanted to have one for so long, and now it was going to happen.



"Scarlett! I'm off to the village," Dad yelled up the stairs.

Scarlett shoved an armful of T-shirts into the drawer, and dashed out of her room. "I'm coming!"

She really wanted to walk there. They'd seen the village a couple of times before. The first time was when they came to look at the house. Mum had got her new job at the hospital, and Mum and Dad explained that they would need

to move, as it was too far for her to drive every day. Scarlett had really missed her for those few weeks when she'd been leaving early, and not getting back until it was almost time for Scarlett to go to bed. Now they'd moved, the hospital was only half an hour away, in Leaming, the nearest big town to their tiny little village, which was called Leaming Ford. Once they'd made the decision that Mum would take the job, and agreed to buy the cottage, Scarlett and Jackson had gone for a day's visit at their new school, and seen the village again. But Scarlett had been so nervous about the school, she couldn't remember what it was like.

"It's so pretty," she murmured, as they walked along the footpath. "Look at all the flowers. I saw a rabbit last

night, Dad, did I tell you?"

"Only about six times! I nearly had a heart attack when you screamed like that. I thought you'd fallen out of the window."

"Sorry! I was excited! I've never seen a rabbit in my garden before!" Scarlett giggled. "Can we go down here? Is it the right way?"

Dad nodded. "Yup, this is the quickest path down to the village, the way you and Jackson will go to school, probably."



Scarlett swallowed nervously. She was still worrying about the school. It was tiny, which was nice, she supposed. There wouldn't be that many people to get to know. But they'd probably all been together since playgroup. They might not want a stranger joining their class at all.

Dad nudged her gently with his elbow. "You had a good time on your visit, didn't you?"

Scarlett looked up at him, surprised.

"It was pretty obvious what you were thinking, sweetheart."

"I suppose. Yes. Everyone was nice. But that was just one morning. I've got to go there every day..."

"It'll be great. You'll be fine, I'm sure you will."

Scarlett nodded. She didn't really want to think about it. "Look – is that the village? I can see houses." She ran on ahead. "And there's the shop, Dad, look."

"I'd better find the list," Dad muttered, searching his pockets. "We definitely need bread. Can you be in charge of finding that for me? Now where on earth did I put it?"

But Scarlett wasn't listening. She had seen something – a noticeboard in the shop window. It was full of advertisements – exercise classes in the church hall, someone offering to make celebration cakes, a nearly new lawnmower for sale...

And a litter of kittens, three black-and-white, one ginger, ready to leave their mother now, free to good homes.