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The Reindeer Girl
The Winter Wolf

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New Tricks for Rascal	Rascal's Festive Fun
Playtime for Rascal	Rascal the Star
Rascal's Sleepover Fun	Rascal and the Wedding

The Secret Kitten



Holly Webb
Illustrated by Sophy Williams

**stripes**

For Poppy and Star, my not-so-secret kittens...

www.hollywebbanimalstories.com

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Chapter One



Lucy stood on tiptoe with her elbows balanced on the windowsill, leaning out to look down at the garden. She had never had a room like this before, right up at the very top of the house. She was so high up that the garden looked strange and far below, the trees short and stubby, even though she knew that they were tall.



Actually, she had never had a room of her own before. She had always shared with William, her little brother. But now they were living at Gran's house, there was space for each of them to have their own room. It was lovely and really odd, both at the same time.

Lucy had mixed feelings about everything at the moment. Gran's house was beautiful with a big garden, not like the tiny garden she'd had back home, but she couldn't stop thinking about the old house. They had been to Gran's loads of times, of course, but always as visitors. Living there was going to be strange and different. The house didn't feel like it was their home yet, even though Dad had explained that he'd bought half of it from Gran. They were all going to share. Gran would help look after Lucy and William, and Dad would sort out the wild, overgrown garden that had got too much for Gran recently, and they would all be company for each other.

It would be good for Dad, Lucy thought, resting her chin on her hands as she stared down at the trees. For the last five years, ever since their mum had died, he'd looked after her and William by himself. He'd had a little help from childminders, but mostly he had been in charge of everything. Now he would have Gran to help and maybe he wouldn't be so worried all the time. It was hard when he had to stay late at work and missed picking up Lucy and William from after-school clubs, or the childminder, or their friends' houses.

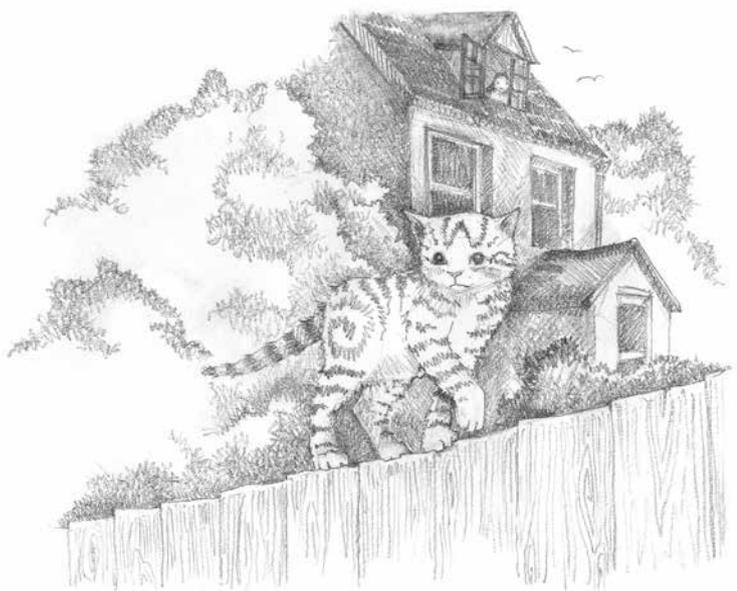
Lucy swallowed hard. They wouldn't be going back to their after-school clubs. They weren't even going back to their old school – Gran's house was too far away. On Monday, she and William

would be starting all over again at a new school. Lucy wasn't looking forward to it.

"It'll be all right," Lucy whispered to herself. "It was nice when we went to see it." The teacher had been friendly and smiley, William had loved the big climbing frame in the playground and it was only a five-minute walk from Gran's house. But it was new and different, and even though there would be a coat peg ready with her name on it and a drawer for her books in the classroom, Lucy knew she didn't really belong there, not yet.

Something stirred among the trees. Lucy squinted sideways, trying to work out what it was. A bird? Then she smiled. A large ginger cat was walking

carefully along the fence, padding from paw to paw, slow and stately. He must belong next door, Lucy thought. Gran didn't have a cat. She didn't have any pets, even though this would be the perfect house for one with its lovely big garden. Lucy thought Gran's beautifully tidy living room would look a lot nicer with a cat draped along the back of the sofa, or curled up on the rug.



But Dad had told them that Gran didn't like pets. She thought they were too messy, and caused fuss and dirt and work. Lucy wished she could argue with Gran and say what about purring and how a cat could keep your feet warm on a cold night? But you couldn't start that sort of an argument with your gran – not her gran, anyway. She wasn't an arguing sort of person. Lucy loved her, but Gran was one of those people who knew she was always right. And she was the one who would be doing most of the tidying up, too!

“Lucy!”

It was William! Lucy spun round, hearing the wobbly tearful note in his voice. “What's the matter?” she asked worriedly.

“Gran shouted at me,” William sniffed. He sat down on the floor, leaning against Lucy’s bed. His face was muddy, except for two little trails where tears had run down.

“Why?” Lucy sat next to him and put her arm round his shoulders.

William snuggled into her. “I was playing football in the garden and then I brought the ball back in with me and I bounced it...”

“Oh, William! Where?” Lucy demanded and he edged away from her a little, hunching his shoulders up.



“In the living room.”

“You didn’t break anything, did you?” Lucy asked anxiously. Dad had made them promise to be careful, but William was only six and sometimes he just forgot things like that.

“No!” William protested indignantly. “But Gran was still really cross. She said I wasn’t to kick balls around in the house, but I hadn’t even kicked it! I was just bouncing it.” He sighed and leaned back on her shoulder again, peering around Lucy’s room at the cardboard boxes, already nearly all unpacked.

“Do you like having your own bedroom?” he whispered seriously.

Lucy nodded. “Yes... But last night I missed hearing you talking to your

Lego people,” she added, to make him feel better.

“I do like my bedroom.” William didn’t sound so sure. “But do you think I could keep all my things in my room, then sleep up here with you? I could bring my sleeping bag.”

“Maybe sometimes,” Lucy said comfortingly. It had been strange going to bed last night without William snoring and snuffling on the other side of the room, but she was glad to have a place that was just her own.

All her own, except that it would be so nice to share it with a cat. Any cat, Lucy thought, wondering if the big ginger cat from next door ever came to visit.

Chapter Two



The black-and-white kitten peered around the pile of old boxes. Her ears were laid back flat and her tail was twitching. Out in the alleyway between the baker’s shop and newsagent, she could see her brother and sister frisking about, chasing each other and wrestling. Her paws itched to join in. She stepped out a little further.