

Remembering my gorgeous Sammy

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Chapter One



Harper sped up as soon as they turned the corner into their road. She couldn't help it.

“Is he there?” Ava called, scurrying after her, and Harper could hear Mum laughing.

“Yes!” Harper turned to beam at her little sister, and then gave a wave in the direction of their house. She knew

it was a bit silly to wave at a cat – it wasn't as if Sammy was going to wave back – but it made her so happy to see him there in the window, draped along the back of the sofa. “I think he's asleep,” she said to Ava. “Oh, no, he's waking up, I can see his golden eyes! Hey, Sammy!”

“Sammy!” Ava bounced up on tiptoe to peer over the garden fence as

the tabby kitten
arched his back
in a huge
stretch. Then
he jumped
his front paws
over to the
windowsill,
so that he was



making a tiny bridge from the sofa. The two girls saw his mouth open wide as he mewed excitedly at them, showing little points of white teeth.

Harper didn't think she'd ever grow tired of it. Seeing Sammy waiting for them made her and Ava feel so special. Even if she'd had a difficult day at school, Sammy always cheered Harper up.

When they'd first brought Sammy home from the shelter as a tiny kitten, he'd had to scramble up the side of the sofa like he was climbing a mountain. Mum had watched him do it, and sighed and fetched a fleecy blanket to cover the fabric. The sofa was nice and almost new and she didn't want it covered in little claw marks. Now, a

month later, Sammy was big enough to jump to the seat of the sofa, and then on to the back, in two huge bounces. It was his favourite place to sit, watching out of the window to see what was happening in the street. Harper reckoned he knew everything that was going on.

“Mummy! Come on!” Ava called, and as soon as Sammy saw Mum holding the front door key in her hand, he scooted along the back of the sofa and disappeared. Harper felt her mouth curling into a smile. He would be on the other side of the front door now, waiting to wind himself around their ankles, still mewing.

He was after his tea, of course, but it wasn't just that. He wanted Harper

and Ava to crouch down next to him, so he could climb in and out of their laps and up their school cardigans and nudge their chins with his nose. Once Sammy had even managed to stand on Harper's head, but that was a bit painful, because he was too small to understand about not sticking his claws in.

Harper and Ava leaned against the door, giggling, as they heard Sammy mewing on the other side. “He missed us!” Ava said happily, and Harper nodded.

“I'm not sure how such a little cat makes so much noise,” Mum said, as she turned the key in the door. “Mind out, Sammy!”

Harper peered round the opening

door, checking that Sammy wasn't too close behind it, but he was so clever and sensible now – he knew about doors. He'd backed up out of the way, ready to race to them as soon as they were inside. Harper kneeled on the floor of the living room next to him, and Sammy purred and purred as she stroked him.



He was so beautiful, Harper thought. She and Ava had fallen in love with him straight away when they saw the photo on the shelter website. Harper had loved the way he looked too small for his huge ears and chunky paws, and Ava thought he was a leopard, because of his dark spots. She told everyone in her Reception class that they were getting a baby leopard for a pet. One of the boys had come up to Harper in the playground and asked if it was true.

Mum had said she didn't mind which kitten they got, as long as it was friendly. They'd waited to adopt a cat until Ava was at school and a little bit more sensible, but a nervous cat would still find it hard, living with all three of

them in a busy flat, even if they were on the ground floor and had a little garden.

The team at the shelter had told them that their kitten might be shy to start with, but he'd soon settle down, and Sammy had. He loved their flat and Harper was pretty sure he loved them too. He was leaning into her hand now, purring so hard she could feel him shake all over.

“Gran’s coming round for tea tonight,” Mum said, as she headed for the kitchen. “So if you’ve got homework for tomorrow, try and get it done now so you can spend some time with her.”

Harper nodded, and scooped Sammy up with one hand and her

backpack with the other. “I’ve got a maths worksheet to do.” She followed Mum into the kitchen and said slowly, “Gran came over for tea on Monday as well... Is she OK?”

Mum sat down at the kitchen table with a sigh and looked around for Ava.

“She’s gone to take her uniform off,” Harper said. She was starting to feel worried now. Why didn’t Mum want Ava to hear what she was going to say?

“Gran’s getting older, Harper, and she misses your grandad still. She gets tired easily, and doing the shopping and making meals feels like a lot of effort for her right now.” Mum rubbed her eyes, looking tired. “So I’ve been getting the shopping for her and dropping it off after work, but it’s nice

for her to eat with us sometimes. It means she doesn't have to cook, and she gets to see you and me and Ava. It cheers her up."

Harper eyed Mum anxiously. That all made sense, but... "There's nothing really wrong with Gran?" she asked. She could hear her voice sounding small and scared.

"No, I don't think so. We just need to look after her, OK?"

It didn't seem like a very definite answer, but Harper nodded.

When Gran arrived later on, Harper kept sneaking glances at her, trying to see if she didn't look well. But Gran seemed happy to be there, chatting to Ava and making a fuss over Sammy. She did look a little bit tired, but

that was all. Maybe she was having a good day, Harper thought hopefully, watching Sammy flop over next to Gran on the sofa, showing off his spotty tummy.

"Oh, are you teasing me now?" Gran murmured to him. "Are you going to jump on my hand if I try and stroke that lovely tummy, hmm? That's what my old cat Bonnie did, every time."



Harper smiled. “He did that to me this morning.” Sammy didn’t show any signs of wanting to pounce on Gran, though. He just collapsed across her skirt, eyes half closed, making wheezy little purring noises as she stroked his ears and tickled under his chin. “How long ago did you have Bonnie, Gran?” Harper said, trying to think. “I’ve seen photos, but I don’t remember her.”

“Oh no, you wouldn’t.” Gran frowned. “Let me see, Bonnie must have died when you were about two. And before you were even thought of!” she added to Ava, who was curled up at the other end of the sofa. “Then for years I couldn’t bear to think of getting another cat – Bonnie was twenty, you see, she’d been with me so long. This

little love might just change my mind, though. You’re so lucky to have him.”

Harper nodded. Gran was right – they *were* lucky. Sammy was perfect and he fitted into their home so well. She couldn’t imagine any different.



Sammy closed his eyes and slumped happily, half on, half off Gran’s lap. He liked Gran. She was calm and quiet, and she never decided to get up and move just when he’d got comfy...

She was rubbing under his chin with one finger now, just the way he liked it, the same way Harper did. Sammy purred hard, pointing his chin to the ceiling.