

# GRIMWOOD



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Simon & Schuster



CHAPTER ONE  
**Ted and Nancy**

This is Ted.



And this is Nancy.



**L**ike a lot of foxes, they lived in a big city. Nancy was the bravest and boldest fox Ted had ever known. He couldn't remember having a mum or a dad, but he had always had Nancy. She made sure he had food and somewhere warm to sleep.

As well as looking after Ted, Nancy liked to mooch around the city with her friends. She knew every street, every dark alley, every bin and every hiding place. Nancy was TOUGH. She had no time for laughing or sniffing flowers or reading comics. But Nancy didn't need those things, oh no.

Ted, on the other hand, was a sweet little fox cub. He liked staying close to the den, which was hidden inside some spiky holly bushes in the corner of a huge park. Ted liked to roll around on the grass in the sunshine, snuffle through twigs and leaves, and lick up dropped

ice-cream cones. Every now and then Nancy would trot by and drop off a snack for him.



Nancy preferred coffee.  
It kept her

**ALERT.**



*Fig. 1*



*Fig. 2.*

Though sometimes, if she drank too much,  
she would shake and bark and Ted would have  
to sit on her head to calm her down.

'Chill out,  
Nancy.'




'Thanks,  
bro.'

Yes, Ted and Nancy were a great pair of foxes, and they had everything they needed. Well, almost everything. Lately, Ted had noticed a weird, achy feeling in his chest. He had it whenever he watched Nancy trot away, leaving him alone in the den. He had it when he saw her chatting with her fox friends, Bin and Hedge. He had it when he saw the cute little humans in

the park holding hands with their big humans. Sometimes he would have it at night, when he would sit on top of a large rock, look up at the big, dark sky and give a heavy sigh.

One afternoon, Ted was curled up in the den when he heard music. Someone was playing the guitar. And then a high, reedy little voice began to sing a gentle song.



Oh, hello, my great big pal  
Oh, hello, my sweet amigo  
I never feel alone  
When my best friend comes to town

Won't you hold my hand and smile  
And together you and me  
Will laugh and sing and dance and skip  
And never be lonelyyyy . . .





Ted scrambled out of the den.

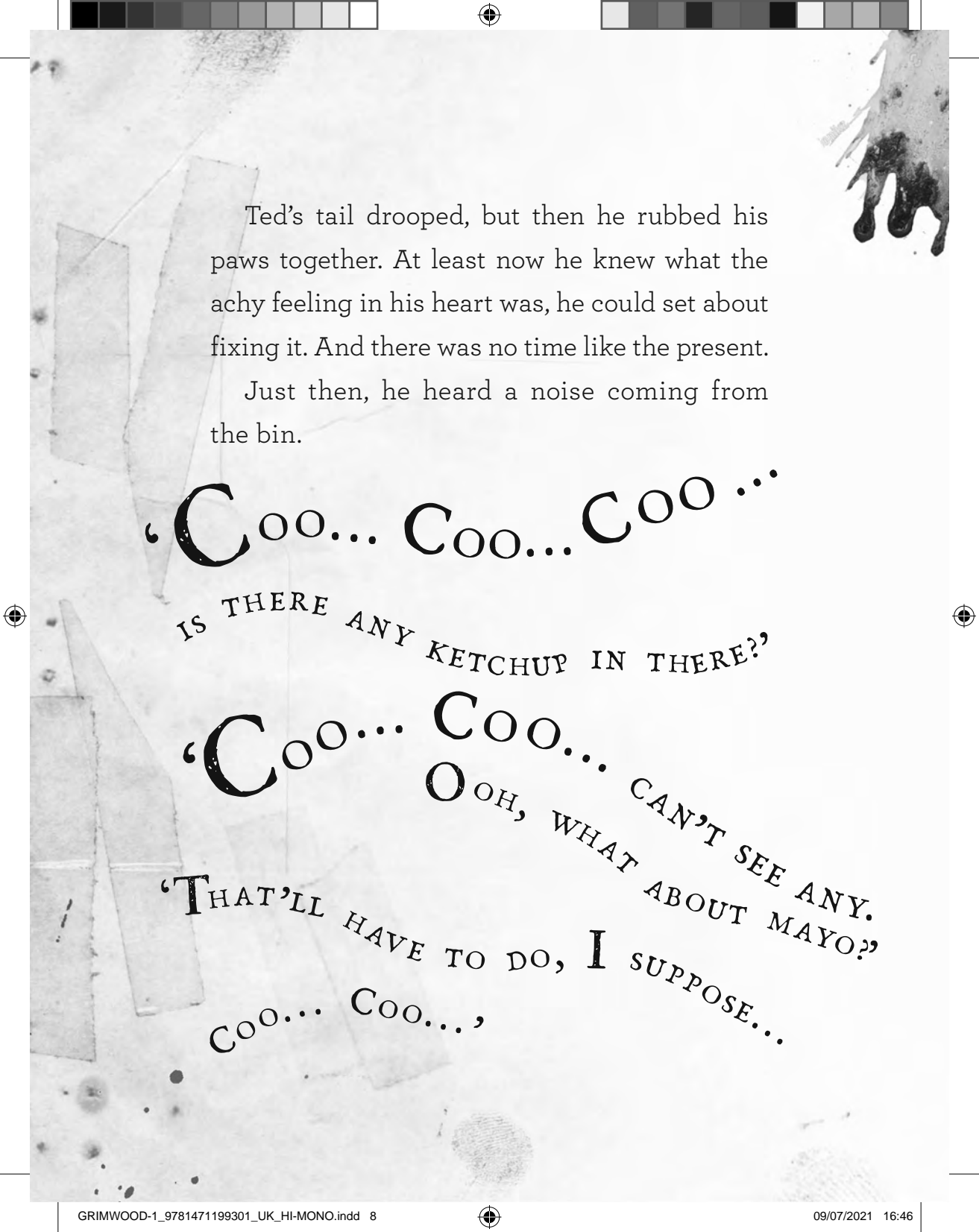
‘That’s it!’ he cried. ‘I’m **LONELY!** I need friends.’

He looked at the grasshopper who had sung the song.

‘Hello! Will **YOU** be my friend, little grasshopper?’ he asked. ‘*You* like to sing, *I* like to sing - we have a lot in common!’

‘Get lost,’ said the grasshopper, boinging away.





Ted's tail drooped, but then he rubbed his paws together. At least now he knew what the achy feeling in his heart was, he could set about fixing it. And there was no time like the present.

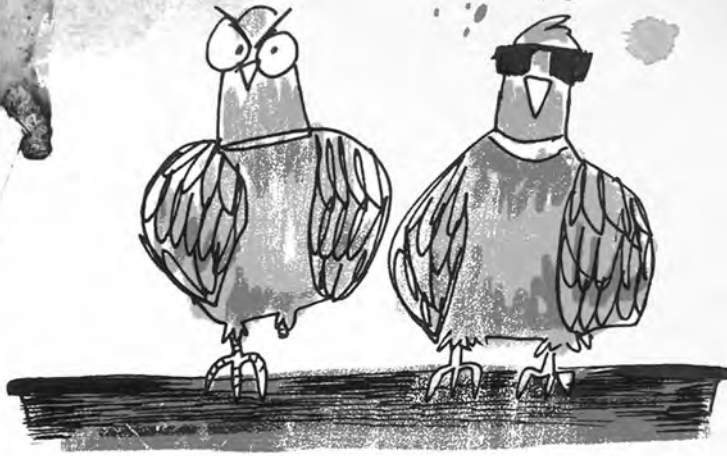
Just then, he heard a noise coming from the bin.

‘Coo... Coo... Coo...’

IS THERE ANY KETCHUP IN THERE?’

‘Coo... Coo...  
Ooh, what about mayo?’

‘THAT’LL HAVE TO DO, I SUPPOSE...  
Coo... Coo...’



Two pigeons were perched on the edge of the bin, pecking out crumbs of crisps and apple and goodness knows what.

‘Hello!’ said Ted. He’d seen these pigeons before. One of them only had one foot, and the other was wearing sunglasses.

‘Go away,’ said the one-footed pigeon.


‘My name’s Ted. I recognize you!’ said Ted.

The pigeon glared at him.

‘I bet you do,’ said the pigeon wearing sunglasses. ‘Your sister bit his foot off.’

Ted blushed. ‘Oh . . .’ he said. ‘I’m so sorry.’

‘What do you want, kid?’ said the one-footed pigeon.



‘Well,’ said Ted shyly. ‘It’s just that I’ve seen you guys around and I get a bit lonely all on my own in the den. I was wondering, um . . . would you like to be my friends?’

The pigeons shook their heads.

‘You must be joking, pal,’ said the one-footed pigeon. ‘I’d like to keep my other foot, thank you.’

And they hopped and fluttered off to another bin far, far away.

‘Oh well,’ said Ted, patting himself on the head. ‘At least you tried. That’s the main thing.’

He was about to make up a song about it when he spotted two shadowy figures perched on a park bench. They had whiskers! They had tails! Ted’s nose twitched in fear. **CATS!** One of them was draining a can of something into its mouth, while the other one was licking itself somewhere rude. Both of them stopped every now and then to do some evil yowling.

Ted whimpered and tried to creep away. He lifted one paw and put it down gently . . . and lifted another paw and put it down gently . . . and lifted *another* paw and—

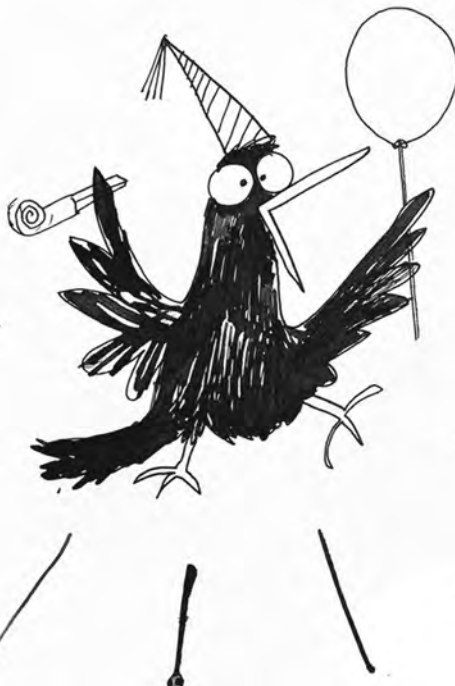
•**AWOOOGA! Let's party!**•

Ted had accidentally stepped on Sharon the Party Crow. ©

‘SHHHHHHH!’ shhhh’d Ted.

•**Party time – ACTIVATED!**•

said Sharon, who then blew a kazoo extremely loudly. ©



The cats jolted upright and glared at Ted with scary yellow eyes.

'HISsss,' they hissed.

'AAAARGH!' aaaargh'd Ted.

He ran back to the den as quick as his furry little legs could carry him.



Nancy was in the den with her pals, Bin and Hedge. They were pulling silly faces and taking photos of each other on their phones.

Ted dived into the den, wide-eyed and panting.

'What's up with you?' said Nancy.

He pointed behind him, whimpering and jumping up and down on the spot.

Nancy grabbed Ted's ears and slowly stroked them until he calmed down.

'C-c-c-cats!' he eventually gasped.

‘Was it HER?’ asked Nancy sharply.

Ted shook his head.

‘Well, don’t freak out then! The other cats ain’t gonna do nothin’ to you, Ted.’

Ted sighed and shuffled over to his corner of the den.

Nancy rolled her eyes at Bin and Hedge. She and Ted were going to have to have a chat.

‘See you later, yeah?’ she said.

‘All right, Nance, later,’ said Bin.



Nancy sat next to Ted, who was curled up in a corner cuddling Slipper, which was an old slipper with a smiley face drawn onto it. He’d had it since he was a tiny cub.

‘When are Mum and Dad coming home, Nancy?’ Ted said.

Nancy sighed.

‘I dunno, Ted,’ she replied. ‘They never said.’

‘But . . . they are coming back, aren’t they? I’d love to know what they look like.’

Nancy didn’t answer. She just gazed into space while Ted sat quietly, listening to the patter of the rain and the distant thrum of traffic.

After a while, he spoke again.

‘Nance, why do the cats hate us so much?’

Nancy curled her bushy tail around Ted.

‘They don’t *all* hate us,’ she said. ‘Just some of them. And you *know* why that is, don’t you?’

‘Is it because of that really horrible cat?’ said Ted.

‘Yeah,’ said Nancy.

‘It’s because of that really horrible cat.’



A decorative border with a black, swirling, scroll-like frame. The right side of the frame is adorned with a detailed illustration of a flowering branch with leaves and small blossoms.

CHAPTER TWO  
**That really horrible cat**



This is Princess Buttons.

She was a cat. A really horrible cat.



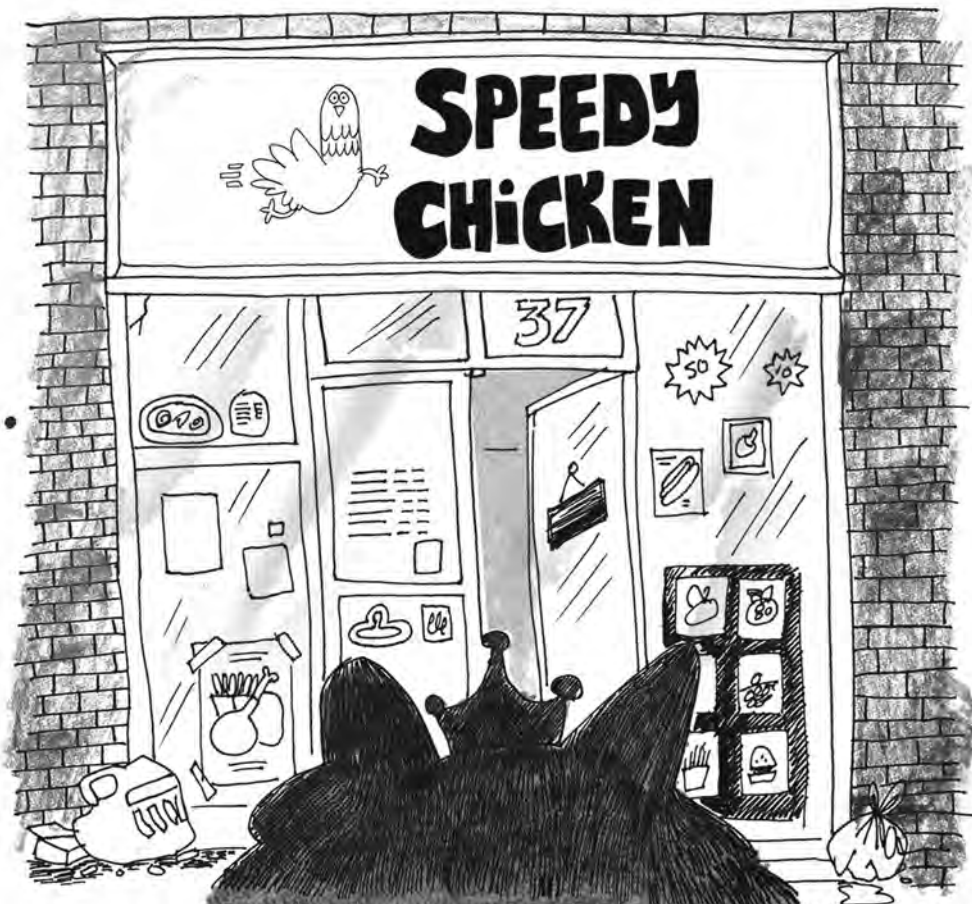
The story goes that a few years ago, Princess Buttons lived in a huge mansion. Her owner was a rich old lady who wore very fancy clothes, even if she was just going to the corner shop to buy some of the posh cat food her pampered pet liked. Princess Buttons went everywhere with her, carried around in a large purple handbag so that she never got her precious paws dirty. Her life was perfect.



But then one day, the old lady choked on a gherkin and was taken away in an ambulance. Princess Buttons lay on the satin sheets of the old lady's bed and yowled. Many days passed, and eventually she knew in her bones that the old lady was never coming back. Princess Buttons would have to make her own way in the big, bad world.

She roamed the streets, hungry and lost.

But then one day she sniffed a waft of something fabulous. 'Gnnnnnnnnnf!' said Princess Buttons, and she licked her lips. She trotted towards the smell, expecting to see a grand department store, or maybe a fancy restaurant. But instead she found . . .



Well. It certainly wasn't fancy, but to Princess Buttons it looked like heaven. She darted down the alley next to the shop, her tummy rumbling. She scaled the brick wall, tumbled over the top and saw ...



Foxes. So many foxes.

They were tearing apart the Speedy Chicken bin bags that had been piled high throughout the day, snaffling all the greasy, gooey food inside. Princess Buttons could just about make out three massive bins, each the size of a small car. Cats, rats,



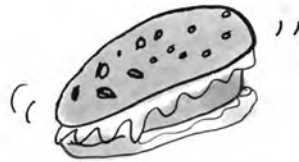
pigeons and mice were hopping around too, chewing on bits of gristle and half-eaten pitta bread.



Princess Buttons skulked along the ground and pounced on some leftover fried chicken. Oh, it was delicious! She'd never tasted anything like it, and she gnawed the bones clean in seconds.

'Ooh, may I?' said another cat, pointing at the leftover bones.

'What?' snapped Princess Buttons.



‘Don’t you want the bones?’ asked the cat gently.

‘No,’ said Princess Buttons, who was used to eating soft, delicate morsels of meat.

‘Great!’ said the other cat, who began to suck and chew on the chicken bones.

‘You must be new around here,’ he said cheerfully, after a while. ‘I’m Bingo! Nice to meet you. Word of advice – you don’t wanna let anything go to waste. There’s just about enough food to go around. But only just. There’s a system, you see.’

And he returned to his bone-crunching.

Princess Buttons frowned.

‘What do you mean . . .  
“a system”?’ she asked.

‘Well,’ said Bingo, licking his lips. ‘It’s simple really. There are three bins.’



The foxes eat out of the blue one, the cats have the green one, and the rats, pigeons, mice and everyone else have the red one.'


Princess Buttons wrinkled her nose.

'You . . . you mean you *share*?' she said, barely managing to get the word out.

'MMmm-hmm!' nodded Bingo.

Princess Buttons felt her hackles rising. SHARE? She had never had to share a thing in her life. She growled and wrinkled her nose. It all sounded VERY WRONG. Something would have to be done.





Over the next few weeks, Princess Buttons scoffed as much food from Speedy Chicken as she could get her paws on. Night after night, she sat by the green bin, waiting for the bags of leftovers to arrive, and **HISSED** at anyone who dared to get too close. She got greasier and grottier. Very soon, everyone in the Big City knew who she was.

‘Why are you lot so soft?’ she said to the other cats one evening. ‘You let those filthy FOXES take all the best bits.’

Some of the cats murmured in agreement, though many just carried on licking their bottoms.

‘We cats need to stand up for ourselves!’ hooted Princess Buttons, who was by now gathering a small crowd. ‘For too long we’ve had to sit by and watch the foxes eat up every last bit of food around here . . .’

Bingo stopped licking his bottom and raised his paw to remind everyone about the bin-sharing system, but nobody seemed interested in listening to him.

‘It’s time to take back control of our bins!’ yelled Princess Buttons, raising a clenched paw in the air.

Most of the cats rolled their eyes and sauntered away. But some of them cheered.

‘Take back our bins!’ they shouted. ‘Kick out the foxes!’





Princess Buttons waited until the group of cats fell silent. She stared at them with her beady little eyes, then bellowed, ‘We will not rest until all the bins are ours!’

The cats cheered even louder. Some of them even started banging tin cans together.

‘Let battle commence,’ snarled Princess Buttons, and angrily bit the end off a sausage.

GOODNESS!



Well, she seems like a total **nightmare**, doesn't she?

All this fuss over some bins. She'd never even met a bin until a couple of months ago. What a **weirdo**.