

Chapter 1

Rain, Rain, Go Away



“Done!” Eva put the final dollop of cake mixture into the last cupcake case with a grin.

Katie held back her long blonde hair and sniffed at the baking tray full of uncooked cakes. “Oh, I wish we could eat them now!”

Smiling, Alex shook her head at her



impatient friend, making her curly black hair bounce about. “But they’ll taste much better when they’re baked!”

Eva’s green eyes lit up like gems.
“And then we can ice them – that’s my favourite part.”

“Hi, girls,” Eva’s dad said to the three best friends as he squelched into the kitchen, his clothes and hair dripping.

“It’s horrible outside today.”

Eva handed her dad a towel to wipe himself down. “Dad, can you put our cakes in the oven for us?”

Her dad nodded, spraying droplets of water over the kitchen tiles. “Of course. But don’t forget about them this time!”

Eva’s cheeks flushed red and Alex remembered why – last week Eva had made shortbread and gone over to Alex’s while it was baking. Alex lived two doors down from Eva, and Katie’s house was in between. Eva had only remembered the biscuits when the smell of burning floated across the gardens from two houses away. Eva loved making things, but she was also quite forgetful!

Katie held up her pink ballerina-shaped watch and pressed a few buttons. “I’ll set a timer – then we definitely won’t forget!”

“Good idea, Katie.” Eva’s dad slid the baking tray into the hot oven. “Right, I’m getting out of this wet cycling stuff.”

As her dad padded up the stairs, Eva looked through the kitchen window. Raindrops poured down it like tadpoles in a race. “What should we do while we wait for the cakes?”

“I wish it would stop raining,” Alex said softly. “I wanted to plant my daffodil bulbs today. But the ground is way too soggy!”

“I know,” Katie sighed. “We haven’t even been to look inside the tree trunk.”

Alex grabbed Katie's arm, her brown eyes suddenly wide with worry. "But what if the feather's there? Shouldn't we check?"

Alex was talking about the magical feather that was sometimes left out for

them in the hollow tree trunk at the end of Katie's garden. It would whisk them off to an amazing and beautiful place – Blossom Wood – so they could help their animal friends who lived there.

Eva had already darted into the hallway. She came back waving a giant golf umbrella. "This will keep us dry!" As she pointed at the back door with the closed umbrella, she accidentally pressed a button on the handle. It shot open. Katie and Alex jumped back.

"Watch out!" Katie laughed, her blue eyes gleaming.

"Isn't it bad luck to open umbrellas indoors?" Alex pushed her feet into her ankle boots while Eva tried to pull the umbrella shut again.

"Oh, don't worry," said Katie, too excited to mind something like that. "Let's



plucked it up with one hand and grabbed Katie's hand with the other. Katie then held hands with Eva, and they closed their eyes shut tight. Alex's heart began to beat as fast as a butterfly's wings, thinking about what would happen next.

The spinning started gently, like the slow twirl of a ballerina, but soon grew

Eva's eyes flashed open. She was a pretty barn owl now, with a white heart-shaped face and light brown wings. "We're here!" she hooted as she balanced her talons on a high-up branch of the shiny Moon Chestnut tree. The woodlanders believed the Moon Chestnut was magical, because it had lived for a very long time – it was the tallest tree in the forest. On their first visit to Blossom Wood, the tree had been dying. But they'd solved the problem and now it looked healthy and strong.

Katie stretched her large snowy-white wings, speckled with black. She was an elegant snowy owl, the largest of the three friends. She blinked her orange eyes in the warm, bright sunshine. "Wow – the weather is so much nicer here than it is at home. It feels like summer!"



Alex shook her feathers out and flapped her brown wings. She was the smallest of the three – a little owl with a fluffy body and a tiny head that bobbed about a lot. “I feel so bad we didn’t check the tree trunk until now,” she said.

“Hopefully Bobby hasn’t been waiting too long,” said Katie, thinking about how she hated waiting for anything. She

looked around at Blossom Wood, which seemed to sparkle like glitter under the sun's rays. Across the beautiful green treetops, Willow Lake glistened in the distance and the snow-capped Echo Mountains rose up over the horizon.

Eva glanced down the tree, searching for their badger friend. The trunk bent around in a crescent-moon shape, which gave the tree its name. "Maybe he gave up waiting? I can't see him anywhere!"

"Oh, owls, you're here!" came a voice. But it wasn't Bobby's. It was much too squeaky for that.

Alex spun around on one leg, and saw a grey squirrel bounding along a branch towards them. "Loulou!"

The squirrel skidded to a stop just above them and waved a paw. "It's so good to see you!"



Katie waved a wing back. “You too, Loulou – but have you seen Bobby? We’re wondering why he asked us here...”

Loulou put her paws to her cute, furry face. “Actually, it wasn’t Bobby who called you here – it was me.”

Alex felt her talons tremble with worry.

“What’s happened? Is something wrong with Bobby?”

Loulou shook her tail frantically. “Oh no, nothing like that! I’m so sorry to worry you! Nothing’s wrong at all. It’s the opposite, really! You see, it’s Bobby’s birthday tomorrow, and we want to have a surprise party for him.”

“What a lovely idea!” Eva twittered.

“We thought it would be,” Loulou replied. “But we’re having a few problems getting everything sorted. I hoped you might be able to help..”

Katie did a little hop of excitement on the chestnut tree branch. “Of course we will!”

Eva nodded. “We’d love to!”

But Alex didn’t reply – not because she didn’t want to help, but because she’d spotted something stripy on the ground far

below them. “It’s Bobby!” she whispered.

Loulou’s pretty black eyes grew huge in alarm. “Oh no, he can’t see you. It’ll ruin the surprise – he’ll wonder why you’re here. Quick, owls, hide!”

