

GWYNETH REES

SUPER CATS



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of fur-raising
excitement!'
HOLLY WEBB



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CHAPTER ONE

A PURR-FECTLY ORDINARY FAMILY OF FELINES

Tagg was born in the spring – the first of five tabby kittens born to his mother, Melody, and father, Chester. It was Melody’s second litter and this time she had her kittens in the family wardrobe, on top of her human’s cleanest and most comfortable sweater.

Melody and Chester were fairly laid back when it came to kitten-rearing. Melody prided

herself on being able to lick a kitten spotless in two minutes flat, and Chester didn't bat an eyelid if one of his offspring tried to climb a tree or went to investigate next-door's cat flap without asking. All kittens got into trouble, he said – especially the adventurous ones. They either learned from their mistakes, or they lost their nine lives rather quickly.

'I know that sounds harsh,' Melody told the kittens, 'but your father is right.



The sooner you realise how perilous the outside world can be, the sooner you will learn not to do stupid or dangerous things.'

Tagg, who was a handsome tabby kitten with a white tummy, white paws and a thick stripy tail, glanced shyly at his father. All the kittens were in awe of Chester – a huge stocky ginger cat with dark green eyes. 'Did you do any stupid or dangerous things when you were young, Dad?' he asked curiously.



‘I don’t believe I did many *stupid* things,’ Chester replied. ‘*Dangerous* perhaps – at least for an ordinary cat.’

‘What sort of dangerous things?’ Tagg was so excited to hear more that he forgot to ask what his father meant by ‘ordinary’.

‘Nothing you need to know about at the moment,’ Melody told him swiftly.

As the months passed, Tagg noticed that his parents were treating him differently to the other kittens. He wouldn’t say he was their *favourite* exactly, but he was certainly the one they scolded and fussed over the most, and he was always the one Chester took hunting.

It wasn’t long before Tagg knew far more than his siblings about the arts of catching

mice, stalking birds and correctly judging whether your prey would fit through the cat flap *before* you made a complete fool of yourself with a dead squirrel.

As Tagg approached six months of age, he was the only kitten of his litter still living with his parents, and it wasn't because no humans had wanted him. Twice Tagg had been rehomed to a new human household, and twice his parents had come that same night to retrieve him. Each time his father had carried him home by the scruff of his neck, until in the end their humans had given up and let him stay.

Tagg didn't really mind. He liked their comfortable home in its quiet, tree-lined street. He had a cat flap to come and go as he pleased, a plentiful supply of food and water

and a well-stocked fish pond in the garden (even if it was covered with an irritating metal mesh).

On his six-month birthday, Tagg was excited as he scampered out into the garden.

‘Uncle Bill has caught a mouse for me to play with,’ he called out to his parents, who were curled up together on the grass. Wild Bill, who was Tagg’s great-uncle, lived on his own in the rickety summer house at the bottom of their garden.

‘Wait, Tagg,’ Chester said urgently. ‘We need to talk to you.’

‘Yes, Dad.’ Tagg sat down obediently, hoping this wouldn’t take too long. His great-uncle wasn’t as sprightly as he used to be and Tagg was worried the elderly cat might not be able

to stop his gift from scampering away if he didn't get there quickly. That was if Wild Bill could manage to refrain from eating it. After all, it was no secret that he was extremely partial to a bit of fresh mouse.

'Now that you are six months old, we want to tell you something about our family,' Melody began. 'It's a secret you must never repeat to anyone. Do you understand?'

Tagg's ears pricked up immediately. He loved secrets. 'Of course, Mum.'

'Good.' She looked at Chester to continue.

'Although your mother and I may seem like ordinary cats,' Chester began, 'we both have a very special ability. A *super* ability, if you like.'

'Wow!' Tagg was even more excited. 'Do you mean you have *superpowers*?' His mother

had often told him bedtime stories about cats with superpowers, but he had always assumed the adventures were made up.

‘That is exactly what I mean,’ Chester replied.

‘Wow!’ Tagg exclaimed again. ‘So what can you do?’ Maybe his mother and father could fly! Or turn invisible! That would explain how they were so good at creeping up on him whenever he was scratching at the carpet or stealing food from the kitchen table.

‘Well ...’ Chester sounded like he was making the most serious of announcements as he stated, ‘your mother has extremely sharp claws.’

Tagg let out a spluttery mew of mirth. He couldn’t help it.

Chester hissed. ‘This is not a laughing matter!’

‘Sorry.’ Tagg struggled to get his face straight again as he stammered, ‘It’s just ... well ... surely ... don’t *all* cats have those?’

‘Allow me to demonstrate,’ Melody said with a twinkle in her eye as she lifted one of her paws and stretched out the digits. Her claws seemed to go blurry for a few moments, then, all of a sudden, they changed into curved blades that radiated an odd, gleaming energy. The miniature swords looked totally unreal on the ends of her dainty white paws.

‘Yikes!’ Tagg blurted out. ‘I mean, that’s ... *awesome!*’

Melody turned around to face her kitten.





‘My super claws will cut through anything, Tagg,’ she said. ‘And I mean *anything*.’

Tagg gulped. Looking nervously at his father, he asked, ‘So what can you do, Dad?’

Chester crouched down on his back legs and began to swing his hindquarters like any cat preparing to spring. But then he leaped off the ground and up, up, up, as high as the roof of the house and right over it.

Tagg raced around to the front of the house as fast as he could, but by the time he got there his father had vanished. ‘Where is he?’ Tagg mewed in wonder as he searched the sky.

‘Oh ... several streets away by now, I expect,’ Melody replied as she joined him. ‘His back legs are *extremely* powerful.’ She gave Tagg’s head a gentle lick. ‘I know it’s a lot

to take in, but don't worry. You'll be used to the idea by the time your own power develops.'

'M-my own p-power ... ?' Tagg gasped.

'That's right. You might have super claws or super strength, or you may develop something completely different. Whatever your power is, your father and I will be here to teach you how to use it properly. That is why we couldn't let you leave us like your brothers and sisters.'

Tagg suddenly thought of something. 'But how come *I'm* the only one? What makes *me* so special?'

'Nobody knows why only one kitten in each litter is born with superpowers,' Melody explained. 'But I *knew* you were the one from the moment you were born.'





It was exactly how I felt when your brother Rowdy was born. He was the super kitten from our first litter.'

'Rowdy?' It was the first time Tagg had heard the name. 'What superpower does he have? Where is he now?'

'He decided that he wanted to go off on his own and explore other places. He has super strength, like Chester.' Her voice was light but Tagg thought she looked sad. 'Now, didn't you say something about a mouse?'

'Oh yes ... wait ... does Uncle Bill know about this?'

'Of course. He's a super cat too – at least he *was*.'

'Really?' Tagg immediately thought of the impressive stench of cat wee in the summer house. His mother had told him that it was

just as well Uncle Bill's wee was so powerful because it meant any strange cats steered well clear. Tagg asked uncertainly, 'So does he have super *wee*?'

Melody let out a little snort. 'Of course not. His wee is quite ordinary, believe it or not. There's nothing unusual about a male cat spraying his territory, though your uncle does take it a bit far. No ... Wild Bill had super *teeth*. They could bite through anything – glass, wood, metal, vets' instruments ... And if he clamped on to something – or somebody – there wasn't anything you could do to shake him loose!'

'Wow! That sounds *mega* awesome.'

'It was. Unfortunately, all his teeth have fallen out now and he has no superpower left. And speaking of Uncle Bill ...'

‘I’d better go!’ Tagg gasped, suddenly thinking of his promised mouse.

‘Make sure you eat it all up afterwards, Tagg,’ his mother reminded him. ‘You know how I feel about cats who only *play* with their food.’

Tagg found his great-uncle sitting outside the summer-house door, thoroughly washing his whiskers.

‘Oh no,’ Tagg miaowed crossly. ‘You’ve eaten it already, haven’t you?’

The older cat looked up and gave him a calm blink. ‘I most certainly have, young fella. Fresh mouse can be extremely hard to resist if you’re that way inclined. That’s why I told you to come straight away. Now off you go while I take my nap.’ Wild Bill napped

after every meal these days, saying that at his age he couldn't be expected to digest food *and* stay awake at the same time.

Looking at his great-uncle now, Tagg found it hard to believe that the elderly tabby cat with absent teeth and patchy fur had once been a super cat.

He couldn't keep the excitement from his voice as he blurted, 'Mum and Dad just told me about their superpowers!'

'Time you knew,' the older cat grunted matter-of-factly. 'So how does it feel to be the son of Feline Force One?'

'Feline Force One?' Tagg asked.

'That was their secret-agent code name. Of course, there were others – Feline Force Two, Feline Force Three, Feline Force Four and such like. Me – I always worked alone.'

My code name was The Gnasher.’ He gave a purr of pride.

‘Wait – you were *secret agents*?’ Tagg wondered what other information his parents had left out.

‘That’s right. Our boss, the top cat, was called Topaz. She lived at HH with the leader of the humans.’

‘HH?’ Tagg asked.



‘Human Headquarters. It’s in the middle of the biggest human city. Anyway, the top human at the time was a real cat lover and he often talked to Topaz about his worries. She learned about all the problems in this country, and that’s how we got our missions. When a different human leader came into power, Topaz was prepared to stay and help her too, only this one was allergic to cats and she found herself banished.’

‘That’s terrible!’

‘It certainly was. Topaz was forced to close down the whole operation. After that we moved here. Your parents had kittens and I lost my last few teeth.’ He belched and Tagg caught a strong whiff of freshly devoured mouse.

‘Mum told me about Rowdy,’ Tagg said.

Wild Bill grunted. ‘Too headstrong for his

own good, that one. Took off without a mew to anyone. Haven't heard from him for almost two summers now – goodness knows where he went.' Wild Bill yawned. 'Now ... if you don't mind, I've some serious sleeping to do.' And two minutes later Wild Bill was gently snoring.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SURPRISE VISITOR

A few days later, Tagg was inside the summer house listening to his great-uncle's stories about the crime-fighting days of his youth. As Tagg rested his chin on his paw, eager to hear more, they were interrupted by Melody calling to them from outside. She sounded cross.

'What's wrong?' Wild Bill asked, as he and Tagg joined her.

‘It’s the big hairy human. He won’t budge from my favourite spot on the sofa.’

‘Could be dead?’ Wild Bill suggested. ‘When they’re dead they stop moving.’

‘Of course he’s not *dead*,’ Melody snapped impatiently. ‘He’s watching some other humans chasing a ball on the TV.’

‘I knew an indoor cat whose human died on the sofa and my pal didn’t get fed for *three days*,’ Wild Bill continued as if she hadn’t spoken. ‘When his water bowl dried up my friend was forced to drink water from the toilet like a dog!’

As his mother and uncle discussed how to make humans vacate sofas, Tagg started to chase a buzzy fly. When he eventually caught and ate it, he remembered his mother warning him that flies were dirty little insects that

carried germs around on their feet. Flies could be swatted but not eaten. Spiders, on the other hand, were much cleaner, although not as tasty, and you had to watch you didn't knock into a web and get sticky stuff all over your nose.

He glanced at his mother, hoping she hadn't noticed, and was relieved she was still deep in conversation with Uncle Bill.

Tagg had a sudden exciting idea. What if his superpower was flying? Imagine being able to soar up into the sky like a bird! Imagine being able to swoop around *chasing* birds! How cool would that be? He could even rescue other kittens from treetops when they got stuck!

Just as he was imagining what colour cape he might wear – superheroes always wore capes on the humans' big TV screens – he heard a noise above him.



As Tagg looked upwards, a roof tile came hurtling down towards them, CRASHING on to the stone patio!

Tagg half expected to see his father on the roof – Chester sometimes misjudged his own strength in relation to everyday objects and situations. But instead he saw the most beautiful cat balanced carefully on their roof. She was slim with sleek silver-grey fur and a shimmery tail, which was currently swishing from side to side.

‘Glamour, what are *you* doing here?’ Melody called up to her in surprise.

‘Hello, Melody ... Wild Bill ... And is this a new kitten I see?’ the strange female sang out in a tuneful miaow as she jumped down from the conservatory roof to the garden wall, before landing elegantly on the ground.



‘Never mind hello ... you could’ve knocked one of us out with that tile. Can’t afford to lose any more brain cells at my age, you know!’ grumbled Uncle Bill.

‘It’s so good to see you!’ Melody exclaimed as the two cats sniffed each other in greeting. Seeing Tagg staring, she told him, ‘Glamour is a super cat like us, Tagg. So is her mate,

Flash. We used to work together.’ She turned back to the other cat. ‘So how are you? Are you still living above the fish and chip shop in Stoke Mewington?’

Tagg spotted movement on the patio and saw Chester returning from his morning prowl.

‘So where is Flash?’ Melody was asking.

Glamour’s purr faded as she cried out in a distressed mew, ‘I don’t know! That’s why I’m here, Melody! I need your help! He’s gone missing.’

‘Missing? When? How?’

Glamour quickly explained how her mate had come here from Stoke Mewington two days ago to get hold of some tickets for a big concert. ‘He said he would be back in twenty minutes, but I still haven’t heard from him.’

Tagg couldn't help butting in. 'No way! Stoke Mewington is a whole day's journey away from here.'

'Not when you have super speed, like Flash,' said Chester, coming up behind them.

'What concert?' Melody asked.

'It's happening at midday today inside some abandoned factory building. Flash was getting the tickets as a surprise for our kitten. Her favourite band is playing – One Purr.'

'One Purr! They're awesome!' Tagg blurted, feeling prickles of excitement in his spine as his tail bushed up slightly. One Purr was the coolest, most successful cat pop band in the country. They were absolutely amazing and totally *famous!*



ONE
PURRB

WE ♥
ONE PURRB

Far too famous to be playing in some old factory in Tagg's home town!

'Never heard of 'em,' Wild Bill scoffed, sounding bored.

'Yes, you have,' Melody said impatiently. 'The drummer's a super cat. Thumper, he's called. Shoots firebolts from his tail. He accidently burned down their last venue. There was a big hoo-ha about it. It even made the human news!'

'It must be in the old factory on the edge of town,' Chester said. 'That's the only one that the humans don't use any more. But who's organised a concert there? And why haven't we heard about it until now?'

'Apparently, the building has just been sold to some eccentric human scientist, and the scientist's cat is organising this

concert. But listen, there's something else ... three other super cats have gone missing from Stoke Mewington recently.'

Melody's eyes were wide. 'Which other super cats?'

'The elastic couple – Bendy and Slinky.'

You mean Feline Force Five,' Wild Bill muttered under his breath.

'And a Siamese I've never met, called Nemesissy. Her power is hypnotising humans. All three of them disappeared in the past two weeks and nobody has heard from them.'

There was a pause as the adult cats all looked very serious and thoughtful.

'We should contact Topaz and the other super cats in the organisation,' Chester finally said. 'I know where to find Feline Force Four, so I'll start with them.'

‘OK, and Glamour and I will go to this concert and see if Flash is there,’ Melody said.

‘I’ll come with you!’ Tagg said, bouncing up and down with excitement.

‘No, Tagg, I’ll be too busy to keep an eye on you,’ Melody said. ‘I might lose you in the crowd.’

‘But I really want to see One Purr!’ Tagg protested.

‘Do as you’re told, Tagg,’ Chester ordered him sternly. ‘It will be safer if you stay at home. I don’t want you leaving until I get back. I should only be away for a day or two.’

‘Be careful, Chester,’ Melody said, rubbing his nose with her own.

Tagg watched as his father confidently padded across the lawn, his powerful tail held upright.

‘My kitten is here too,’ Glamour told them. ‘Can she stay with Tagg while we check out the concert?’

‘Of course. Tagg will keep her company, won’t you?’

As Tagg grunted in reply, Wild Bill said, ‘You can both join me for my morning nap, if you like. You youngsters nowadays don’t sleep nearly enough.’

‘Mum, *please!*’ Tagg tried again desperately, while Glamour trotted off. ‘You *have* to let me come with you!’

‘Absolutely NOT!’ his mother hissed, showing him all her teeth this time. ‘You don’t have your superpower yet and this could be dangerous. You’ll stay here and be nice to Glamour’s kitten.’

Tagg cringed, knowing better than to keep

arguing. He couldn't believe his mother could be this cruel. One Purr was playing! If only his superpower would hurry up and arrive!

As Melody followed Glamour around to the front of the house, Tagg put his head down, made his ears flat and sulkily followed Wild Bill towards the summer house.

Another boring afternoon in the garden awaited ... Unless ...

Tagg checked behind him, just in case his mother or father should reappear. The coast was clear. Wild Bill had gone inside the summer house.

Tagg took a deep breath and thought about One Purr. This was his chance! And he had to take it now, before Glamour's kitten arrived!

Before he had time to change his mind, he bolted through the hole in the fence that led to the neighbouring garden.

