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for Meow**

The Purrfect Show

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Scholastic Inc.

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Cats and Cake Batter

"I think this is my best idea yet."

Pepper purrs. She leans over the side of the mixing bowl and sniffs the batter inside. Then she licks the tip of her heart-shaped nose. That's how I know this is a *really good* idea.

I, Kira Parker, have a lot of ideas. Some of them

are *pretty good* and some of them are *really good*. My little brother, Ryan, would probably tell you that my ideas are *not so good*, but I know he's going to love this one. After all, who doesn't love cupcakes and cats?

Our family owns The Purrfect Cup, the best and only cat café in town. We live right upstairs, in an apartment with blue walls and yellow tiled floors. Mama runs the business and takes customers' orders. Dad bakes the treats we sell. And I get to spend all day with the best friends a girl could have: the cats!

Pepper, our family's cat, rubs her gray-and-white fur against my arm. I know she's asking for a taste of the batter in my mixing bowl.

"This is for the customers, Pepper," I say. "You know cats can't eat chocolate."

Pepper wears a name tag that I made for her. It says, *Kira's BFF for all 9 lives*. On the back, it has her name and Mama's phone number. Making special name tags was a *great idea* I had in June.

But now it's July, and I have a new idea.

The other cats who live in the café are from the local animal shelter. Customers come to The Purrfect Cup for a mug of tea and a slice of Dad's sweet potato pie. They stay because they fall in love with the cats. Sometimes, they decide to adopt a cat and take it home! It's hard to say goodbye to my friends, but I know it's good for

them to find their forever homes. Every time a cat gets adopted, Mama, Dad, Ryan, and I throw a party for the customers and give away free mini donuts.

My *new idea* is going to get more people to adopt cats. I'm going to make a cupcake inspired by every cat living at The Purrfect Cup! I'm working on the first cupcake recipe now. It's inspired by Tiger, a striped tabby cat.

For this recipe, I need two types of batter. Tiger is sweet and round, like an orange, so the first flavor is orange cream cake. Tiger can also act a little bitter when I wake her up from her naps. Dark chocolate is bitter too, so the second flavor is dark chocolate.

I swirl the orange and chocolate batters together to make a cupcake striped like Tiger's fur. The swirled batter looks so pretty as I scoop it into the cupcake pan.

"Everyone will want to adopt her after they eat this!" I say. "But I wish you all could help me fill these pans. It's hard to scoop the batter without spilling."

Tiger rolls onto her back and licks her paw.

"At least you know to wash your hands before you touch the food," I laugh.

The kitchen is in a separate room behind the café. The oven is three times bigger than the regular one in our apartment upstairs. Dad lets me practice my baking down here as long as I don't

turn on the oven without him around. I told him I'd need his help in a few minutes—I'm going to surprise him with my new idea!

Just then Tiger flops back over onto her belly. She sits up in front of the mixing bowl, leans her head back, and lets out a HUGE sneeze! The sound startles Pepper, who leaps over the mixing bowl. Only she doesn't quite make it over—her back paws and her tail dip into the batter!



"Oh no," I say. "Everyone, calm down! I'm sure Tiger just had a tickle in her nose. No reason to panic."

But it's too late. Max, a leopard-spotted kitten who's always looking for trouble, jumps onto the counter. He pounces on a bottle of vanilla extract. Then he goes for the cake batter stuck to Pepper's tail.

"Max, no!" I cry. I reach out for him, accidentally knocking over the mixing bowl. Now I have orange batter all over my apron. *Uh-oh*. I stick a finger in it to see if it at least tastes good.

Suddenly the door to the kitchen swings open.

"Are you kidding me?" Dad asks.

"Don't you mean, are you kitten me?" I ask. Dad crosses his arms. Pepper gives me the side-eye. I should have known a cat joke wouldn't get me out of this mess.

"Kira, what did I say about cats in the kitchen?"

"You said no unsupervised cats in the kitchen."

Dad sighs. "I said no cats in the kitchen. *Period.* I can't have cat hair getting into my homemade marshmallow fluff."

"I'm sorry," I say. "I'll help you clean up!"

I turn around to pick up the bottle of vanilla extract and accidentally knock over the baking powder.

Dad's face crumples into a grumpy scowl.

"That's okay, Kira. Why don't you go help your mama out in the café?"

I scoop Tiger into my arms. Max leaps onto my shoulder.

"C'mon, guys," I say. "I'll have to come up with a new idea to help you get adopted."