



## Chapter 1

# AN ANGEL IN THE ATTIC

Jet McSwiney suspects that her guardian angel might be a bit lazy. As far as she can tell, it is made of pure, diamond-white light: nothing else. Yet it moves and sways, as fragile as a soap bubble caught in the breeze. Then there are the stars; hundreds of them. Tiny silver stars that flash and disappear all around it, like sparklers on bonfire night. Jet's angel is, by far, the most beautiful thing that she has ever seen. But it isn't always helpful and, sometimes, it is downright incompetent.

"Just my luck to have a guardian angel that can't seem to do anything right," she thinks, squinting at the angel-light that is beaming out from the corner with eye-scorching brightness. When the sparkles turn into multi-coloured blobs that float up and down, like the wax in a lava lamp, Jet arches her eyebrows.

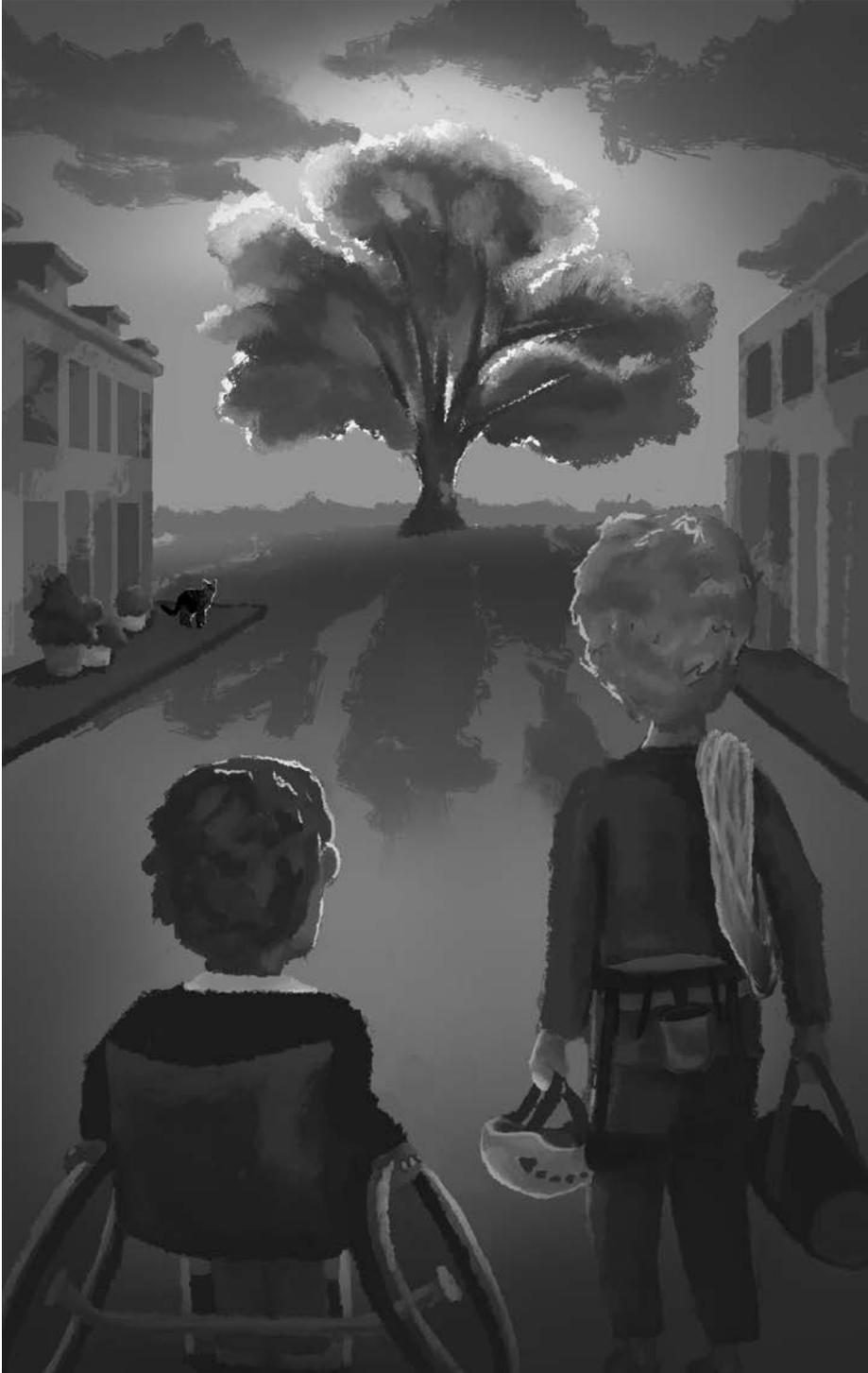
"Oh well, now you're just showing off," she says out loud, a hand shielding her eyes, and her voice breaking into a giggle as the angel-light fades and then disappears, leaving Jet alone in the dark.

Most of the time, Jet lives a solitary life in her small, barely furnished, attic bedroom at the topmost part of the house, far away from everyone. Her home-made bed is actually five wooden pallets, roughly nailed together by her father and topped with a lumpy mattress so full of holes that it looks as if the dog has had a chew on it. But Jet doesn't care about

*An angel in the attic*



INDIGO WARRIORS



## *A tree at the end of the road*

paints on a canvas. Curtains are drawn in every darkened window and the only witness to the boys' activities is Hercules, the swaggering young tabby cat from number 29. His curiosity getting the better of him, Hercules slips out from his hiding place under a hedge and pads behind the boys, stalking them as they hurry towards the tree at the end of the road.

Positioning his wheelchair directly under its branches, Noah secures the brakes and looks straight up at the long five-finger leaves, fluttering high above him. Letting out a gasp, he realises, for the first time, just how tall 'his' tree really is and he can feel his hands starting to tremble. His thoughts race so much that he has trouble remembering how to tie the bowline knot, to attach the rope to his harness. Quickly repeating the instructions – "... rabbit down the hole ... out the hole ... round the tree ... down the hole ..." – he just can't make it work, and the first tinge of panic flashes through his body.

"Take it easy, Noah, I'll make sure it's fastened," says Peter, as he ties the knot, double checks that it is secure and then nods.

This time neither boy is laughing.

Setting his trolley aside, Peter carefully prepares the rope and throws it over one of the branches. The boys look at the height of the tree and then at each other.

"Hell's bells, Noah," says Peter. "I really hope this holds."

"Oh, this tree won't let me come to any harm," says Noah, his hand running over the rough bark, which catches his thumb. "Ouch!"

"Noah. It's a tree," says Peter. "It can't ... oh, never mind. Are you ready for this?"

"Nope," murmurs Noah, under his breath, bracing himself before he looks at Peter, smiles and gives a single nod.

"Right! Well, here goes nothing," says Peter, taking up the slack and pulling the rope through the braking plate on his harness: heaving Noah out of his wheelchair.



## Chapter 3

# PIGS!

Angela Omaboe is running late when she hands a tiny grey rabbit to Polly, who holds the warm little body, nervously, in her cupped hands. Angela's garden-shed-hospital has had a busy week.

"We're a bit behind," she says. "Help me feed this lot and then we can go."

"Erm, okay," says Polly, her face distorting into a frown because she can't seem to make the rabbit sit still and offer him the feeding bottle at the same time. "But we'll need to hurry, or we'll miss the wheelchair boy."

"Cheryl's due to take over soon and she's never late," says Angela, looking up from a hedgehog with an eye infection and adding, "Polly, what are you doing to that poor little rabbit?"

"Do you ever worry about leaving Cheryl here on her own?" asks Polly, distractedly, trying to wipe spilled milk formula with one hand and manage the lively little rabbit with the other. "You know, with her having ... you know?"

"Down Syndrome," says Angela, extending both hands towards Polly, reaching for the rabbit. "It's called Down Syndrome, Pol ... and just why should I be worried about that?"

"I don't know," says Polly, adding, "I just thought ..."

"Well, don't! And give me that baby before he starves