



The Flyaway Kite

By Catherine Doyle

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The kite arrived on Tuesday evening, but it was only a string then. It sat patiently on the doorstep, waiting for the Fitzpatrick family to finish singing Happy Birthday. Oscar, who was in the middle of turning seven years old, was thinking of his wish.

‘Hurry,’ said his sister, Zoe.

‘The candles are melting into the chocolate.’

Oscar blew them out, just as the doorbell rang.

‘That was quick!’ He slid down the hallway in his socks and swung the front door open. ‘I knew you’d – *oh*.’



It was only a small brown box. Inside, Oscar found a spool of silver thread wrapped in a diagram for a simple, home-made kite. And, on the back, a note scrawled in spidery ink:

Meet me on the moon.

‘I bet it’s from Nan,’ said Oscar, excitedly. ‘We always do fun things on my birthday. Like playing frisbee in the park and going shopping for silly costumes ...’ He trailed off.

‘That was before,’ said Zoe gently.

Before Nan’s house got too big for her. Before the stove got too hot and the stairs too steep. Suddenly, there had been so much cleaning and cooking and remembering to do, they had decided, as a family, that Nan would go somewhere where other people could look after all that stuff. Where they could look after her.

Oscar pretended not to hear his sister. ‘Step one,’ he said, spreading the diagram between them, like a treasure map. ‘Sticks.’



Zoe took off to wrestle the tree in their garden. When she came back, Oscar glued two branches together to make a cross.

‘Step two: cloth.’ Oscar glanced around for their mum, then cut a square out of the tablecloth.

Zoe gasped.

‘Quick,’ hissed Oscar. ‘Onto step three.’

The string was the trickiest part. There was a lot of looping and knotting and threading.

Finally, Oscar set the kite down. ‘Ready.’

‘Wait!’ Zoe stuck a pair of googly eyes to it. ‘*Now*, it’s ready.’

In the back garden, they grabbed hold of the string as the kite took off in a sudden gust.

They were tugged up, up, up, over the roof and across the neighbourhood. They erupted in giggles as the streets turned to fields and the fields to forest, the countryside unfurling below them like a magnificent green carpet. The wind whooshed them onwards, through misty rain and marshmallow clouds.

And still they flew, until the world shrunk to a blue marble.

The moon rose, big and silver-bright, as the universe threw its arms around them.

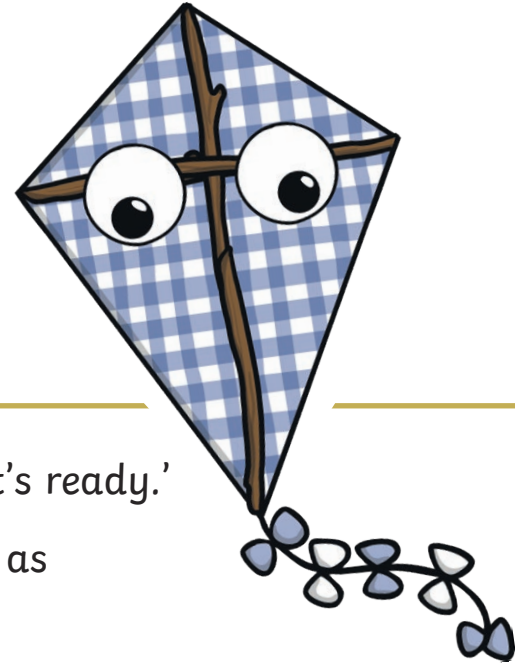
The kite kept them aloft, as the stars twinkled hello.

‘Room for one more explorer?’ A frilly pink kite drifted past them, wearing a matching pair of googly eyes. Nan floated from its silver string, grinning from ear to ear. There was a diamond-shaped hole in the back of her dressing gown.

Oscar’s heart did a somersault. ‘Nan, you came!’

‘You didn’t think I’d miss my grandson’s birthday, did you?’ She winked.

‘Not for all the world.’



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