

**≡Home≡
for Meow**

Kitten Around

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Cat Pies

I blow a huge puff of air through the bubble wand in my hand. It makes big, soapy bubbles that float around the café. One of them lands on a customer's nose. Oops. Another bubble lands on the customer's shoe. My family's cat, Pepper, pounces on the shoe and pops the bubble with



her paw. The customer looks startled at first, then smiles when he sees her gray-and-white tail swishing back and forth.

"Pepper, be careful!" I laugh. "You'll get bubbles all over our customers."

Bubbles, a big brown-and-black-striped cat, leaps over to me when she hears her name. She

sits in front of the bubble wand, waiting for me to blow into it again.

"I know exactly what you're thinking, Bubbles," I say. "You're thinking, *Kira Parker, how do you come up with so many great ideas?* Well, this one was easy! Your name is Bubbles, so I knew you'd love bubbles. It's just simple math."

Bubbles meows at me. I don't think either of us knows much about math. I scratch behind her ears, and she purrs. Bubbles is living at my family's cat café, The Purrfect Cup, until she goes to her fur-ever home. Lots of cats from the animal shelter come to live with us until they can be adopted, but Bubbles is one of the

most special cats ever because she gave birth to six kittens! I found adoptive homes for all the kittens, and now Bubbles is going to become a part of our family forever—because my granny is adopting her this weekend!

I look at the clock in the café. It's shaped like a cat. All the numbers are in a circle around the cat's belly, and its tail swings back and forth to announce a new hour. The cat says it's almost five o'clock. That means Granny should be arriving soon! She said she'd be here right after the café closes at five. I have so many *great ideas* for Granny's visit. I'm going to teach her all about how to care for a cat. And I can show her how to use the bubble wand.

I want to tell Mama all about my ideas—I don't think I can wait until Granny gets here to share them! Mama is standing behind the register at the back of the café. In front of her is a long, long line of customers. The line weaves around the tables, cozy seats, and cat beds that fill the café. The customers smile and take pictures of the cats in the café while they wait. Mama told me that the line is so long because business at the café is booming!

Mama runs our café's business, and she's really good at it. She wanted to increase The Purrfect Cup's *social media presence*, which means she started posting pictures of Dad's baked goods online. Dad is the best baker in the whole world!

A lot of people liked Mama's photo of his mini cat-shaped blueberry pies. Pepper and I were excited because we thought the pies were for the cats. Turns out they're for humans only. But now lots of customers are traveling from other towns and waiting in long lines to get a taste!

"Hey, Mama," I say, running up to the register. "Can I tell you about my ideas for Granny's visit? I'm going to read eight books about cats to her, show her how to clean out a litter box using only one hand, and then—"

"Sorry, Kira, can this wait?" Mama asks. She presses her apron to her forehead. "We're swamped right now. I need to help this customer."

The café doesn't look like a swamp. I don't see any alligators. But it does look busier than ever. I thought that was a good thing, but Mama looks so tired.

"I can help take customers' orders!" I say. That should cheer Mama up. "I had this idea about building a robot that can take ten orders at once—"

"How about you go upstairs and help Ryan make Granny's bed? That would help me so much, Kira."

"Okay," I say. I feel a little disappointed. I wanted to help Mama in the *café*, not upstairs in our apartment! Plus, making beds is so hard. My little brother, Ryan, and I always get tangled up

in the stretchy sheets, and Pepper loves to hide under the covers while I'm trying to smooth them out. I grab Pepper and Bubbles to head upstairs, but not before turning back to Mama.

"Can I tell you and Dad about my *great ideas* later?" I ask. Mama and Dad haven't had much time for my ideas lately.

"Sure," Mama says, but she doesn't sound so sure. "But your dad is probably going to be up all night again making pies."

The café kitchen is right behind the register at the back of the café. The door to the kitchen is open, and I can see Dad inside. He's hunched over a giant mixer that's spraying flour all

over the place! He's been baking nonstop for days. Maybe he wants to trade places with me. I can make pies, and he can make the bed. But before I can ask him, the door to the café swings open, and the smell of vanilla perfume reaches my nostrils. Granny is here early!

Dad always says that Granny likes to make an entrance. That doesn't mean that she builds doors. It means that she makes sure everyone, even the doors, is paying attention to her when she shows up.

She twirls into the café in a big leopard-print coat. "Kira!" she says, loud enough for all the customers to hear. "Look at my grandbaby, all

grown up! I bet you're running this place by now, aren't you?"

I smile. I know I'm not running the café.

But maybe I could.