



## CATHRYN NORRIS

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From the moment a Tintin book flew off the library shelf and into Cathryn's arms, she discovered a thirst for travel and a love for adventure stories. When she isn't exploring new places, she lives in Somerset with her husband, two daughters, a supercilious cat, a paranoid border collie and a Tiger Moth aeroplane.

Cathryn writes both at home and in a peaceful workplace above an art gallery. When she doesn't write, she's a teaching assistant in a primary school, and feels lucky to mentor children in a small writing group.

### *About Tiger Moth*

*A light-hearted contemporary story where ordinary children have an extraordinary adventure.*

Beatrice's rivals give her a hard time at school, but life improves when her nanna buys a share in a 1930s Tiger Moth aeroplane. Bea has flying lessons and becomes an excellent pilot. Inspired by the Dunkirk Spirit, Beatrice and best friend Gabe embark on an adventure, but things spiral out of control when a trip to France doesn't go as planned. The journey takes them into a web of intrigue and deceit. It's a journey where the past becomes real; a journey where Beatrice discovers how strong she can be.

*cnorris321.cn@gmail.com*

*@CathTigermoth*

# TIGER MOTH

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## *Chapter One*

I had my feet up on the dashboard and a bag of crisps balanced on my skirt. School had been rubbish as usual; I needed cheering up. To make matters worse, my tongue was stinging because I'd licked all the salt and vinegar off my crisps.

'It's not far now Beatrice,' said Nanna Dee, leaning forward and wiping the dirty windscreen with her silk scarf. 'You're in for a treat.'

We were in the middle of nowhere, zooming along the country lanes in her old, banged-out sports car. 'Where are we going, Nanna Dee?' I loved it when she took me out after school and I couldn't wait to hear what my surprise was. It was better than sitting on my own waiting for Mum and Dad to get back from work.

'Is it the cinema?' I asked. 'I really want to see *Zombie Downloaded*.' But I guess neither the film nor lying about my age was Nanna's kind of thing. She just shook her head and smirked because she knew the secret, and I didn't.

It was November, so the sky was already turning dark. Nanna switched on the headlights and the beam flooded the road ahead of us. I closed my eyes and breathed in the smell of old car leather and the scent of stale perfume on her fake fur coat. She'd stuffed it down by my feet and I kept thinking it was a cat or something.

The car bounced over some speed bumps, spoiling my one and only moment of chillaxing. I wished Nanna would drive a bit slower. The springs from the worn-out seat poked into my backside and I wiggled around trying to get comfortable.

Eventually we came to a stop.

'Get out and open the gate then, Beaswax,' said Nanna as she pulled on the handbrake. I opened the door, but the car started to roll back.

'Nanna!' I frowned at her. 'You need to get that brake fixed!'

'Oh grief!' She thrust her heeled boot down on the foot brake and the car stopped rolling. I stepped out and slammed the door behind me. The place was deserted. A stretch of grass lay to the right, and down the end of a bumpy road were a number of massive garage-like buildings.

'Are you sure about this?' I shouted through the closed window. Her orangey lipstick mouth moved, but I couldn't hear her. I opened the door again. 'What?' I said.

'Pardon, not what darling. And yes. Yes, of course I'm sure. The gate, Honey-Bea, the gate; come along girl.' She pointed a long red fingernail out in front of her.

'OK, OK.' I walked away thinking she was very bossy. The bolt was stiff and my hands were freezing, but eventually I swung the gate open. Nanna Dee drove the car in, and waited for me. I stood on the bottom bar, pushed off with my foot and swung it back. It crashed shut with a metallic thud and I jumped off. 'What is this place?' I asked, as I got back into the car and slid into my seat. 'Some kind of factory?'

'You'll see,' she answered. We drove along and a loud whirring started up from one of the buildings. A few seconds later, a spidery metal plane with shining silver wings appeared.

I stared at her. 'You brought me to an airport?'

'An airfield Bea. I knew you'd be excited!'

Excited? Was she having a joke? Nanna clapped her hands together, and the car swerved off the road. With a shriek, she gripped the wheel and spun it into a parking space outside one of the metal buildings. Light streamed out of the huge sliding doors.

I didn't understand. Planes – seriously? I couldn't work out why we were there. It was too dark to see them flying.

I was beginning to think this wasn't a normal trip out.

Nanna undid her seatbelt and leapt from the car with the energy of a five-year-old, her heels click-clacking as she marched across the parking area. A gust of icy wind blew her black cashmere cardigan out behind her; she looked

like a crow. 'Come quickly out of the cold and into the hangar, darling,' she said, as I joined her by the large metal doors.

'Hangar?' I thought of my clothes dangling in the wardrobe.

'Hangar with an "a". It's the name of the building where planes are kept, Honey-Bea.'

'I knew that,' I said, looking away.

I'd never been in a hangar with an 'a' before. It was cold, and the lights were so bright I had to squint at first. Messy workbenches were piled high with tools, tins, wood and pieces of machinery. I was hit by a chemical smell, paint or glue or something. I pinched my nose and breathed through my mouth.

There were four planes in total. A red and white two-seater which looked quite modern; one of those strange open-sided things, that reminded me of a mechanical dragonfly; an ugly black one, stripped down, needing repairing; and a fourth.

The fourth was just an aeroplane but I had to admit it was beautiful.

It had two sets of wings and no roof. It was painted brown and khaki-green on top and yellow underneath. The letters G-ALWS were painted on the side. A wooden propeller was on the nose of the plane and two wheels were attached at the bottom. It was as tall as an ice-cream van and about two cars wide. I put my hand on the wing. 'It's soft!' I said beginning to smile, 'I thought they were made of wood. It looks like wood.'

A tall man, wearing a bandana and dressed in a brown flying suit, popped his head up from the other side of the plane. 'That bit's made of Irish linen,' he said, and, as if to match, he spoke with an Irish accent. 'Want to sit inside?'

I nodded. You bet I did! He came around to our side of the plane, holding some small wooden steps.

'Hello Dusty,' said Nanna, running her fingers through her hair. She's really pretty for a fifty-seven-year-old, what you'd call a glamorous granny.

'Hello Dee,' he winked at her. I reckoned this man must be fifty at least, and definitely too old for flirting. He eventually turned away from her and grinned at me. 'And this must be Beatrice.'

'Hi,' I said. I liked him; he had one of those faces that smiled all over. He showed me how to climb up and where to put my feet so I didn't tear the canvas.

‘So, you’re my new rookie are you?’

‘Rookie?’ What was he on about? I stood on the wing, threw my leg over the side and climbed into the back cockpit. I sunk into the leather seat, and even though I’m tall for my age, I was only just able to see over the top of the door.

‘Sure, my new recruit.’

I didn’t have a clue what he was talking about, but I didn’t care. I was so excited about sitting there.

Nanna was excited as well. ‘Me too!’ she said, and grabbed hold of Dusty’s arm.

He peeled her off and led her to the steps. ‘In you get then.’ He held her hand as she clambered up into the front cockpit.

‘Isn’t she a beauty, Bea?’ said Nanna Dee. ‘She’s a DH82a De Havilland Tiger Moth.’

I knew the plane was old; it was a bit like one of those Spitfires you see at air shows or on the TV. In between my legs was a joystick, and I gave it a wiggle. There were two pedals down by my feet, and I pressed down on them, pretending I was the pilot. ‘Is it from World War Two?’

‘Tiger Moths were used to train pilots, especially during World War Two,’ said Dusty as he watched us. ‘But your mum knows all about that, don’t you Dee?’ He twisted the gold hooped ring hanging from his ear.

‘Oh Dusty, you do flatter me! You know I’m her grandmother!’ said Nanna Dee as she twiddled her blond hair. ‘But yes, I do know all about it. My father flew one.’ The pair exchanged a look. I wondered how Nanna knew Dusty, and why we were there.

I suspected there was more to all this than Nanna was letting on.

## *Chapter Two*

### *This is War*

When I got to school the next day, I couldn’t wait to tell Gabe. He was sitting on the wall outside our class, swinging his legs and letting his heels bang against the bricks. His hair was sticking up at weird angles. He saw me and smiled.

‘Gabe, you’ll never guess what.’

‘What? The school’s closing because of the rubbish teachers?’

I ignored him. ‘Listen. Nanna Dee has bought a share in a Tiger Moth aeroplane.’ I scrambled up on to the wall next to him. ‘She owns half of it.’

‘Which half? The front or the back?’

‘Be serious! I’m not joking. She saw an advert in the paper. My great uncle left her some money in his will, so she used it to buy a plane. I went to see it last night.’

At last I got his attention. He turned to face me, his mouth wide open and his eyes twinkling. ‘Seriously?’ he said. ‘That’s so cool. Can I come and see it?’ He ran his fingers through his hair. ‘What kind of plane is it?’

‘You *have* to come and see it. It’s one of those old-fashioned planes; my great granddad flew one in the war.’ I pulled out the newspaper advert from my rucksack and shoved it in front of him. ‘They were made by a man called Geoffrey De Havilland.’

‘Wow,’ said Gabe.

‘Exactly,’ I said.

‘Are you going to fly in it then, Bea?’

‘I might. I’ll see how Nanna gets on. She’s going up first. On Saturday.’

We both stared at the picture. ‘Isn’t it lush?’ I asked. Gabe turned his head to look at me and smirked.

‘What?’ I said.

‘Beatrice, I’ve never seen you so interested in anything before.’ He tipped his head to one side. ‘Maybe horses. Horses and deciding which way to tie up your hair, like most girls. That’s about all.’ He gave a smirk. I knew he was winding me up.

‘Gabe, that’s sexist. And it’s so not true!’ I smacked his leg and slipped the picture into my bag. ‘I’m interested in loads of things.’ I jumped off the wall, straightened my skirt and dusted off the dirt.

‘Like?’ He raised his eyebrows.

I thought for a while, chewing the inside of my mouth. ‘I like geography and learning about different countries. I want to be a traveller when I grow up. So there.’

‘OK, OK,’ he said with his hands held up in defeat, ‘but you have to admit, you don’t normally like mechanical, engineeringy things do you?’

‘Not normally. But you have to admit, that plane is awesome!’

Gabe nodded. He didn’t have to say anything else.

When we got into class, there was a crowd around the front tables. We chucked our bags on to the nearest desk and rushed over to see what was happening.

I should have guessed: Callum Brooks.

Showing off as usual.

Callum stood there holding up a chunk of rock, like an Olympic winner waving a trophy in the air (except he’d never be an Olympian, he was too much of a slob).

‘It’s volcanic rock from Mount Etna,’ he said, in his stuck-up voice. His squinty brown eyes darted from one face to another. ‘We went there at half term, it’s in Sicily. Sicily is an island off Italy.’ He caught my eye and we glared at each other for a few seconds, his mouth curled up at one end in an ugly sneer.

Most of the class wanted to see what he’d brought in. I could tell he was loving the attention, answering all their questions.

‘Cool!’

‘Can I hold it?’

‘Is it radioactive?’

I didn’t think it was even that great; it was only a dirty old stone. I caught Gabe’s eye. He shook his head and scowled. Since the beginning of primary school we’d been in competition: Callum Brooks, Octavia Hillman-Burgess and William Pritchard – (collectively known as COW) against Gabe and me (Gabriel and Bea = Team GB). But now we were in Year 6, things were getting nasty.

‘Here we go again,’ whispered Gabe. ‘It’s just like when Callum brought in that Roman coin from Bath last term. He thought he was so cool.’

‘Yeah, and it wasn’t that good,’ I said. ‘It was really small.’

I felt warm breath on the back of my neck. I looked over my shoulder. William Pritchard had crept up behind us. He put his mouth close up to our ears and hissed: ‘Yeah, but he went to a posh hotel in Bath, and that’s more than you’ll ever do.’

‘You don’t know anything about where we go.’ I took a step away from him. ‘Just leave us alone.’

‘Yeah, Pritchard,’ said Gabe. ‘Callum’s not the only one who’s visited Bath, I’ve been there too. Just because I didn’t bring back a stupid coin doesn’t mean –’

‘Yeah, but you didn’t go to the Apple Store ...’

‘I drank the healing water from the Roman’s spa fountain.’ The tips of Gabe’s ears went red, but he kept his cool and stared William right in the eye.

‘Yeah, but did you go to the Apple Store Summer Camp and design a robot?’ asked Will.

‘No.’ Gabe’s eyes narrowed.

‘That, Gabriel-la, is where you’re the loser.’