



Series: The Magical Animal Fairies

Book: Lara the Black Cat Fairy

North, South, East, West

‘Come on, Kirsty.’ Rachel Walker picked up her rucksack and smiled at her best friend, Kirsty Tate. ‘It’s time for our next activity – we’re going on an orienteering expedition.’

‘Oh, great!’ Kirsty exclaimed happily, lacing up her walking boots. ‘I’m really looking forward to it.’ Then she grinned. ‘To be honest, I’m not exactly sure what an orienteering expedition is, though!’

Rachel and the other girls in the cabin, Emma, Natasha, Katie and Catherine smiled warmly at Kirsty.

‘Orienteering is using a compass and a map to find your way to a meeting-place,’ Emma explained. ‘All the different teams try to get there first. It’s great fun.’

‘It sounds fantastic,’ Kirsty agreed. ‘I’ve enjoyed every activity here at camp so far,’ Rachel remarked to Kirsty, as their room-mates went outside.

Kirsty nodded. ‘And it’s been even *more* exciting since our fairy friends asked for help!’ she whispered.

On the day the girls arrived at the camp, they discovered that Jack Frost had been up to his old tricks in Fairyland again. This time he and his naughty goblin servants had kidnapped seven Magical Animals from the Magical Animal Fairies.

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The Magical Animals were very rare and precious because they helped to spread the kind of magic that every human and fairy could possess – the magic of imagination, luck, humour, friendship, compassion, healing and courage. The fairies trained the Magical Animals for a whole year to make sure they knew how to use their powers to spread their wonderful gifts throughout the human and the fairy worlds.

But Jack Frost was determined to make sure that the animals never got their chance to use their magical gifts. He wanted everyone to be as grumpy and miserable as him! So he and his goblins had stolen the young Magical Animals and taken them to his Ice Castle. But the animals had managed to escape into the human world, where they had hidden themselves away. Jack Frost had sent his goblins after them, but Rachel and Kirsty, with the help of the Magical Animal Fairies, were determined to find the young animals first, and return them safely to Fairyland.

‘I’m glad we managed to find Sizzle the dragon yesterday,’ Rachel said, as she and Kirsty left the cabin. ‘Ashley was so pleased to see him again, wasn’t she?’

Kirsty nodded. ‘I hope we find the other youngsters soon,’ she said anxiously. ‘Remember what the fairies told us – that the Magical Animals can’t always control their powers properly because their training isn’t finished yet.’

‘They ran rings around Jack Frost and his goblins when they escaped from the Ice Castle though, didn’t they?’ Rachel laughed.

Rachel and Kirsty joined their room-mates, who were standing with the girls from the cabin next door. Edward, one of the camp counsellors, was there too.

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'Ah, there you are,' Edward said, smiling at Rachel and Kirsty. 'Here's your map and compass. You're going to walk due west for twenty-seven paces, and find your way to a mystery location!'

Everyone listened carefully as Edward explained how to place the compass on the map and watch the magnetic needle to find out which direction was north.

'Hold the map steady, Kirsty,' said Rachel as the needle swung round. 'Look, that's north.'

So west is *that way*,' Kirsty said, pointing to her left. 'Come on, Rachel!'

Some of the other campers had already headed in that direction, and Rachel and Kirsty followed them, counting their steps under their breath.

'Twenty-four, twenty-five,' Rachel murmured. Then she stopped and burst out laughing. 'Look, Kirsty, we've arrived at the camp canteen!'

'Well done, everyone,' called Edward, who hurried out of the canteen at that moment. He began handing out bottles of water and cereal bars. 'That was easy, wasn't it? Now we're going into the fields to try a longer route, so follow me!'

Edward strode off and everyone hurried after him. Soon they were out in the fields that surrounded the camp.

'In orienteering, it's really important to use your compass correctly,' Edward explained, opening the gate into the field. 'Because this is a race between different teams, you must find the shortest route between the points on your map. If you don't, you won't win!'

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'I'm enjoying this, aren't you, Rachel?' Kirsty remarked, taking a sip of water. 'I never thought maps and compasses could be so much fun!'

Rachel was about to reply when a soft, muffled noise suddenly caught her attention. She stopped and cocked her head to one side. *Meow!* There it was again!

'I can hear a cat,' Kirsty said, glancing around at the long grass.

'Me too,' Catherine agreed.

Suddenly Rachel noticed a tiny, jet back cat in a patch of fuzzy dandelion clocks. The cat was batting at the plants and then chasing the downy white seedlings as they floated off into the air.

'Look, there it is,' she pointed out. 'Isn't it cute? I wonder where it's come from?'

'It's probably from one of the nearby farms,' Edward replied.

'Oh, I love cats,' Emma said eagerly. She knelt down on the grass and held out her hand. 'Here, kitty!' she cooed.

The cat stopped playing and looked over at them. She had beautiful, emerald green eyes and her black fur gleamed in the sunshine. As the cat began to purr loudly, Kirsty gave a gasp.

'Rachel!' she whispered. 'The cat's whiskers are shimmering!'

'I know, I can see it too!' Rachel murmured, her heart thumping with excitement. 'It must be fairy magic!'

Before the girls could say anything more, Rachel suddenly felt her golden locket slip from her neck. She made a grab for it but missed, and it fell into a shallow ditch at her feet.

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‘Is it broken?’ asked Kirsty as Rachel bent to pick it up.

Rachel examined the locket and shook her head. ‘No, it must have come undone, somehow,’ she replied, frowning.

A loud flapping of wings overhead made everyone look up at that moment. A large pigeon was swooping down towards them, its bright eyes fixed on the half-eaten cereal bar in Catherine’s hand.

‘Help!’ Catherine shrieked in alarm, as the pigeon grabbed the bar and flew off with it.

‘Are you OK, Catherine?’ asked Rachel. Before Catherine could reply, Emma, who was still kneeling near the cat, gave a cry of pain.

‘Oh, my hand’s burning!’ she gasped, rubbing it hard. ‘I must have touched that patch of stinging nettles *there* –’ And she pointed to a patch of nettles. ‘But I don’t remember seeing them before!’

‘Here.’ Edward grabbed a handful of large leaves and handed them to Emma. ‘Rub these dock leaves where it hurts, and it will feel better.’

‘Rachel, have you noticed that *three* unlucky things have happened in just one minute? Kirsty whispered to her friend. ‘This little black cat *must* be one of the missing Magical Animals!’

Read the rest of *Lara the Black Cat Fairy* and discover what magic happens next!

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