

A young girl with long blonde hair is the central focus. She wears a crown made of green leaves and white flowers. Her face is dusted with white snow, and she has a serene expression with her eyes closed. Her hands are clasped together in front of her. The background is a vibrant blue with a pattern of falling snowflakes.

Beatrice  
and the  
Snow People

Gloria Irene Troyer



*Ten-year-old Beatrice Brown has a very vivid imagination. Instead of going home after missing her school bus, she chooses to stay in the nearby forest with her cat, Rufus. It's winter and they are picked up, tossed around inside a blizzard, and blown into a magical place where fantasy comes to life. That is why her encounter with the Snow People is one of the most important days of her life.*

# Beatrice and the Snow People

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# **Beatrice and the Snow People**

Gloria Irene Troyer

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## Chapter 2

### Apartment Life with Rufus

“Beatrice. Do you have your school bag packed?” Mom hollered from the kitchen. She was washing the dishes and tidying up the counters before leaving to go to work. With her hands in the soapy dish water, she thought about her only child. She had a smile on her face.

Beatrice was named after her maternal Grandmother, Dorothy’s Mom. Bea even looked like her Granny. But more than just her physical features, Bea shared a lot of her Grandmother’s characteristics.

She was a small girl. Her weight was a little bit on the low side which made her look even smaller and almost frail, compared to some of her classmates. Bea compensated her petite size with a strong and out going personality. She did not want to be considered weak.

Her hair was a light brown colour and had a bit of wave to it, just like Grandma. She liked it cut below her chin. In the summer she could wear it pulled back and clipped so that the hair was away from her face. Lately, she wore it parted to one side and had little sparkly barrettes, to hold back the few strands of shorter hair. They would fall in front of her face when she bent down to write at school. That irritated her.

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Beatrice was certainly not shy. She was friendly and spoke to everyone. She had conversations with animals like her cat and even the trees and flowers. She was certain that they could answer back. She had such a vivid imagination that for her, every day was like a new mystery that needed to be solved. This worried Dorothy in a way. She was afraid that Beatrice could not make a good decision if faced with an obstacle. "Would she know the difference between what was real or what was make believe?" Dorothy wondered.

Dorothy and Bea had moved to the South Pine Road Apartments a year ago. Beatrice's father, who was in the Canadian military, was killed in a country that was far away from Canada called Afghanistan. After the death of her husband, Dorothy wanted to move as far away as possible from the military base and its memories.

Once she found a job, she and her daughter relocated to a small city in southern Ontario. They rented a two bedroom unit. It was a quiet building, had great security and was very clean. The outdoor property was beautiful with lots of pine and cedar trees and very well cared for. There was even a play ground with swings, climbers, and a slide for the kids who lived there.

In the mornings and after school, Bea would go down the hall to apartment number two hundred and ten. Pearl lived there. Pearl was a lovely older woman in her late seventies who was always

dressed up as if she were going out somewhere special. She wore well pressed dress pants that had a crease down the front of them, usually with a nice silky top. She did like the colour of soft pink, and most of her blouses and sweaters were that shade. She told Bea that, “pink reminded her of summer days and wild roses that were a lovely shade of pink”. She always wore a single strand of pearls around her neck. Her hair was totally white, curly, and perfect. It never moved out of place. She went to the local hair salon on Friday’s to get a wash, trim, and curl. While she was there she also had a manicure and always wore bright shades of red nail polish on her long and well cared for nails.

Pearl was a widow like Dorothy. Someone who was married but whose husband had died. She had lived in the same apartment for fifteen years. When Dorothy asked Pearl, if she would be interested in providing before and after school care for Bea, Pearl answered without any hesitation, “yes”. Pearl told Dorothy that, “she would love the company”. She had one request though. She said that “if her favourite television show, a mystery series, was on, Bea would have to be quiet.” That wasn’t a problem for Bea, as she too loved mystery stories. Dorothy was relieved that Bea had a safe place to go to before and after school.

Pearl made sure that Bea had a delicious after school snack and a nice beverage to drink. If Bea were lucky Pearl would have

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baked some of her yummy peanut butter muffins. When they weren't watching the TV, Pearl had lots of games. They often played Scrabble, Monopoly, or put together puzzles. Sometimes they looked at old magazines that Pearl had from years ago. They would laugh at some of the fashions they saw.

Every morning before Dorothy left for work, she would lock the door to their apartment and would walk Bea down the hall to Pearl's apartment. After school Bea would buzz Pearl from the apartment foyer and Pearl would unlock the automatic doors for Bea to enter. Bea stayed at Pearl's usually an hour or more, until her mom arrived from work. Dorothy had given Pearl a spare set of keys to her apartment.

"Oh my goodness I need to get going to work as soon as possible". Dorothy had finished the dishes and looked at the kitchen clock. "Traffic will be heavy at this time in the morning and I do not want to be late for work. How silly of me day dreaming this early in the day. "Bea, are you ready yet?"

"Yes Mommy all except for my indoor shoes. I can only find one," Bea answered from her bedroom. She was on her hands and knees looking under her bed for the lost shoe. At school the kids had to have two pairs of shoes, one pair for inside of the classroom and one pair to wear outdoors at recess.

"It's not here," said Rufus with a lazy yawn. Rufus was a Maine Coon Cat and Beatrice's best friend. He looked at her and



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yawned again as if to say, "Leave me alone. I need to have a cat nap now." When he didn't want anyone to bother him he would go underneath the bed skirt and snuggle up against the baseboard radiator to stay warm and cozy while he slept. He did not appreciate this intrusion especially with Bea yelling so loudly.

Rufus was a rescue cat. He was homeless and his mother had been hit by a car. Bea read a flyer about him at the local supermarket. A picture of Rufus was on a photocopied piece of paper that said 'FREE CAT to a GOOD HOME', pinned on the cork board just inside of the store's main doors. She tore it down and took it to her mom who was shopping. Dorothy told Bea that, "it if they were to provide the kitten with a home; it was Bea's responsibility to care for her new pet". They drove that afternoon to pick him up.

He was a kitten when Bea got him. They still lived on the military base then. After Bea and Rufus got to know each other a bit, he told Bea very proudly that, "he was North America's oldest natural longhaired breed." He was an unusual cat, beautiful, large in size, with a sweet personality and silky all-weather coat. The person, who had posted the sign, described his colour as "coffee and cream". Most of his fur did look like coffee and cream when it is mixed together in a mug. His large paws were very white. He cleaned himself all of the time, when he was awake that is. His tummy was extremely soft furred. He often lay on his back hoping

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that someone would rub his big belly. He was exceptionally intelligent.

He often acted like a clown. He would chase paper balls from one end of the hall to the other. He loved plastic bags and there were several placed around the apartment for him to lie on. He had a great disposition and often acted more like a dog than a cat. Bea had taught him to play fetch, with a colourful wire shaped spring toy. Rufus was very good company and well behaved. When Bea was at home he followed her from room to room and liked to "talk" to her sometimes.

After Bea got home from school, Pearl would unlock the apartment door where Bea and her mom lived, and let Rufus out. He would walk down the hall into Pearl's apartment. Bea and Pearl would laugh together because in the winter his legs were so furry he looked like he was wearing snow pants. He walked very regally ahead of them like a King, with his long fluffy tail straight up in the air. He felt quite at home at Pearl's and she always had a bag of cat treats. She took great delight when he would sit at perfect attention, in front of her chair as she watched TV. He often got as many treats as he wanted at Pearl's. Then when she forgot to toss them to him, he would curl up on a couch nearby for a bit of a nap.

Once Dorothy finished work and got to Pearl's apartment, Bea and Rufus would leave with her for their home. Pearl always

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stood in the doorway of her apartment and would watch the three of them walk to their door. “Good-bye Bea, Dorothy and Rufus. See you tomorrow,” then she would quickly close her door. Pearl did not want to miss a second of her mystery series that was playing on the television.

Yes, life at the apartment was exactly what Dorothy wanted to provide for Beatrice. Stability, kind neighbours, a good school and lots of forests, and play areas for Bea. Dorothy’s only concern was that Bea would get into mischief with her make-believe friends. She worried knowing that it was only just a matter of time.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Bea's Big Idea**

“Bea,” said Rufus. Bea was reading a book while lying on her bed. Rufus lay beside her and every so often she would pet his soft furry body. “Yes Rufus. What is it that you want?”

“Well I am so lonely living as an apartment cat.” He continued. “When you and your Mom leave for the day I am left here on my own. I miss going outdoors. I loved hunting and exploring at our other house. There, I was allowed outside whenever I would hook at the screen on the back door.” He whined.

Bea put her book down onto the bed. She remembered how mad her Dad would get when Rufus would hook his nails into that sliding door and pull on the screen. Eventually, they had to get it replaced. The new door had a cat flap where he could come and go as he pleased. Bea thought about what Rufus had just said. She considered, “how dreadful it would be if she could never go outside to play”. She closed her book and got up off of the bed. She walked over to her bedroom window to think out loud, “how can I solve this problem for Rufus?” She asked herself.

“Hmmm” Bea said. “Rufus I have an idea.”

“What if I sneak you outside while I go to school? You can play or explore in the woods next door. If you hear someone is

walking in the area, you can hide in the bushes. That way no one will think you are a stray cat. Once I get off of the school bus at the end of the school day, we can meet at a mutual place. It would have to be near the edge of the woods. Then, I will sneak you back into the apartment building.”

“Well Bea that does sound like a great idea. But how could you possibly sneak me out without anyone noticing?” Rufus said doubting that it would ever happen.

“You just leave that for me to worry about,” said Bea. She was excited now. She was making plans to get Rufus outside of the apartment.

“Hmmm,” said Bea. “I am going to go for a little walk along the driveway of the building to figure out where I will drop you off and pick you up.”

Rufus was excited. He loved it outdoors. There were so many places to explore. He often sat on the window ledges of both Bea and her Mom’s bedroom, when they were away. He could smell the fresh air through the window screens and hear the birds twitter as they gathered food and flew from tree to tree. He also saw rabbits and skunks running across the large front yard of the apartment. There were squirrels and chipmunks dodging here and there in and out from under the cedar hedge.

From Bea’s bedroom window sill he could see the front of the apartment’s property. At the edge there was the sidewalk and

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beside that was a major city street. The bus stop that Bea went to was visible to Rufus. It was at the end of the driveway. Bea did not have to cross the street either way, going to school or coming home from school. On most days Rufus watched as Bea ran for the school bus. Once she was on the bus he would jump down from the ledge.

Then he would find a cozy place to sleep and spend most of his day dreaming about when he was a kitten. Then he was free to do what he pleased outdoors. He dreamt of wandering down a path in the forest, lying under a tree on the cool grass of a summer's day, jumping in the air trying to catch and play with butterflies. He did like to chase birds, rabbits, and mice but he never actually caught any as he knew Bea would be upset.

"Mom," yelled Bea from her room. "Can I go outside and pick up some of the pinecones that are beside the property? Mr. Harvey wants us to bring in as many as we can to make crafts for Christmas."

"I don't see a problem with you going outside Bea. But you must stay on this side of the building so that I can see where you are. You could find a lot of pinecones along the fence area that separates this building from the property next door."

Bea got up off of her bed and said to Rufus, "I am going outside to gather pine cones but I am also going to check out the

area along the fence, to find the best place for you to go for your day outing.”

“I just don’t know how you will get me out of the apartment? You know how strict the Superintendent’s of the building are about pets? We were lucky that they even allowed me to live here,” Rufus said.

“I am working on a plan,” said Bea. “For now you go into Mom’s bedroom, jump up onto the window ledge, and pay attention to me while I am outside. I will wave to you when I find the perfect spot for you to go under the fence, in order to explore the woods. That is where you will wait for me, once I get home from school.”

“Ok Bea. You are in charge of this adventure. Could you please hurry up? I am getting very sleepy and will soon need my cat nap,” Rufus said. He was already yawning.

Bea had pulled on her pink snow pants and zipped them up. She pushed her feet into her purple boots and put on her jacket, mitts and hat. Mom wrapped her striped scarf around her neck.

“You must stay on this side of the building so that when I look outside of the bedroom window, I will see you at all times. Do not speak to any strangers and do not wander anywhere else other than along the fence. Do you understand?” Mom spoke in a firm voice.

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“Oh yes Mom,” said Bea enthusiastically. “Don’t you worry Mom there are plenty of pine trees and cones to gather up in the snow.”

Dorothy handed Bea a recyclable cloth grocery bag, to put the pinecones into. Little did she know what her daughter’s ulterior motive was for going outside.

“Bye Mom,” said Bea

“Have fun outside Bea,” said Mom.

Dorothy shut the apartment door as Bea made her way to the elevator. They lived on the second floor. Bea pushed the elevator button to go down to the first floor. When the elevator doors opened and she got in, she then pushed the button to floor one. It was the main level of the building. She walked through two sets of glass front doors. She went across the parking lot to the snow covered grass area separating the apartment building from the forest.

Rufus, who seemed to have revived from his sleepy moment, ran and jumped up onto the window ledge. He could already see Bea. She waved up to him. He knew that was the spot where he would go under the fence, if he actually made it to the outside. He watched as Bea bent down and picked up pinecones one at a time with her small hand. Each cone was fragrant and crisp with the smell of spruce.



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Rufus imagined how fresh and alive the outdoors would feel to him. He was very excited. He was puzzled though and wondered how Bea thought that she could possibly get him from this bedroom window, outside to the woods.

He thought to himself that, “the hardest part will be to sneak me out of the apartment building without anyone noticing.” However, he knew that Bea had a plan. He saw that little twinkle in her bright green eyes. He knew that she was already ahead of him with the details of her plan!

He could tell by her actions and the smile on her face that she knew how she was going to get him outside for the day. She smiled up at him as she headed to the front doors of the building. She was carrying the grocery bag and it was full of pinecones. She had picked up enough for each classmate to have one. But more importantly she had figured out how and where she would drop off and later pick-up Rufus, after his fun filled day spent in the forest.



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