



The Snow Hunters



Chapter One

The children were not happy!

Eight Christmases had passed without snowfall and last time it did snow at Christmas, many of the children were too young to remember it. They could only imagine how magical that Christmas must have been.

Year after year, Christmas after Christmas, thousands of children in Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Cheshire, Merseyside and beyond, sat at their bedroom windows, staring up to the sky, hoping for snow.

But it never came.

Children still buzzed with Christmas excitement and the sound of carols could be heard everywhere.

Lights still flickered on Christmas trees and carrots were still left out for reindeers but without the snow, Christmas could never be perfect.

So, the children wrote to the Prime Minister:

Dear Prime Minister

Where has all the snow gone, and can we have some for Christmas please?

And the Prime Minister wrote straight back and said:

Dear Children,

I have no idea where the snow is. Why don't you go and find it? I will send the best snow scientist in the world, Professor Amiera Sawas, to help you as well as a snowmobile for you to travel in.





Chapter Two

And true to her word, the following morning, Professor Amiera Sawas, the best snow scientist in the world, arrived in a snowmobile to pick up a group of five children and their dog called Seamus. This group quickly became known as “The Snow Hunters”.

The Snow Hunters, Professor Amiera and Seamus, all climbed into the snowmobile which was when Professor Amiera spoke to the group.

“You, like all children, are very special – but you have been chosen to be ‘The Snow Hunters’. Your task is to give all children a chance to experience the perfect Christmas – a white Christmas. But first of all, I’d like to know what Christmas means to you?”

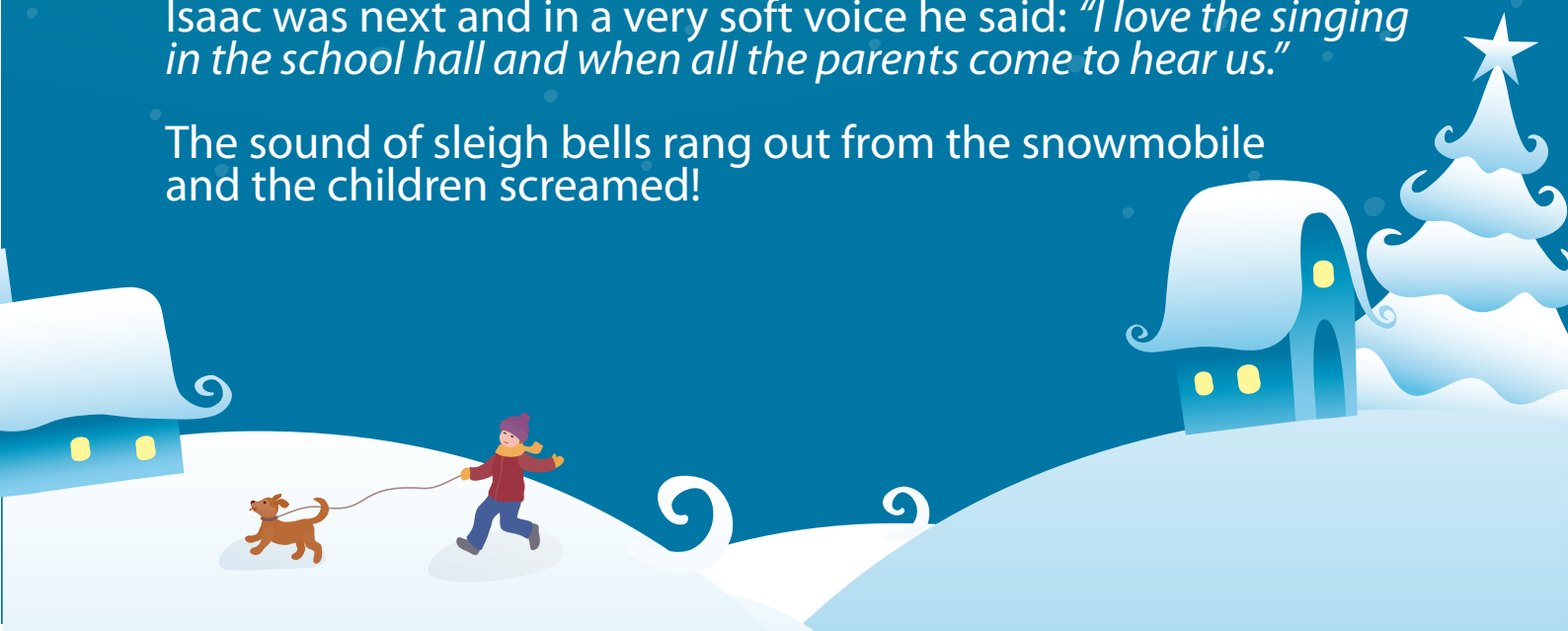
Sara, the eldest and tallest of the snow hunters spoke first: *“I love the presents, opening them...slowly... ripping the paper to reveal what you’ve hoped for.”*

Josie, the youngest of the snow hunters said: *“It’s not just about presents though, is it? Yeah, they’re important, but what makes me most happy is all my family being together.”*

Paddy, with his bright mop of ginger hair said: *“I love the smell of Christmas. Sitting at home on Christmas Eve, closing my eyes and enjoying the smells floating in from the kitchen! Turkey, roast potatoes and parsnips sweetened with honey.”*

Isaac was next and in a very soft voice he said: *“I love the singing in the school hall and when all the parents come to hear us.”*

The sound of sleigh bells rang out from the snowmobile and the children screamed!





"IT'S SANTA CLAUS!"

A light flashed on and off in the dashboard and Professor Amiera said: *"It's not Santa, IT'S THE SNOW PHONE!"*

She picked it up and listened carefully to the message.

Amiera continued: *"That was 'The Snow Patrol'. They are weather forecasters and have told me that snow is expected to fall in the Lancashire hills in one hour. We must leave immediately!"*





Chapter Three

The snowmobile zoomed down the motorway as fast as it could. On the journey Isaac turned to the final member of the Snow Hunters; a small, quiet girl called Mo and said: "What's your favourite thing about Christmas, Mo?" But Mo did not reply, she sat shy and silent.

Then Josie spoke up for her. *"Mo doesn't speak. If she wants to say anything, she writes it on her chalkboard."*

"Have you brought your chalkboard, Mo?" said Amiera.

And from her pocket, little Mo produced a thin piece of white chalk and a blackboard the size of a small reading book and smiled.

The children cheered as Mo began to write. Chalk dust fell from the board as she scratched away and when she had finished, she slowly turned the chalkboard over to reveal the word:

"SNOW"





Chapter Four

The snowmobile travelled at great speed, hurtling past The Trafford Centre, over Barton Bridge and The Manchester Ship Canal, and just as they reached Winter Hill, the snowmobile rapidly picked up speed and lifted off the ground.

The snowmobile began to fly! The children sat frozen, mouths wide open and Professor Amiera explained: *"Snowflakes are made up of tiny pieces of ice that gather around small pieces of dust, forming icy crystals in the clouds. We need to look inside a cloud!"*

They Snow Hunters spent all morning exploring clouds, searching for the snow, when suddenly, Seamus began to bark excitedly and Isaac screamed:

"SNOW!"

One of the clouds was weeping snowflakes like confetti and the children cheered triumphantly. Professor Amiera shouted: *"Wait! Let's follow the snowflakes to see if they 'stick'. Sometimes, the air in towns is too warm and the flakes melt before they land."*

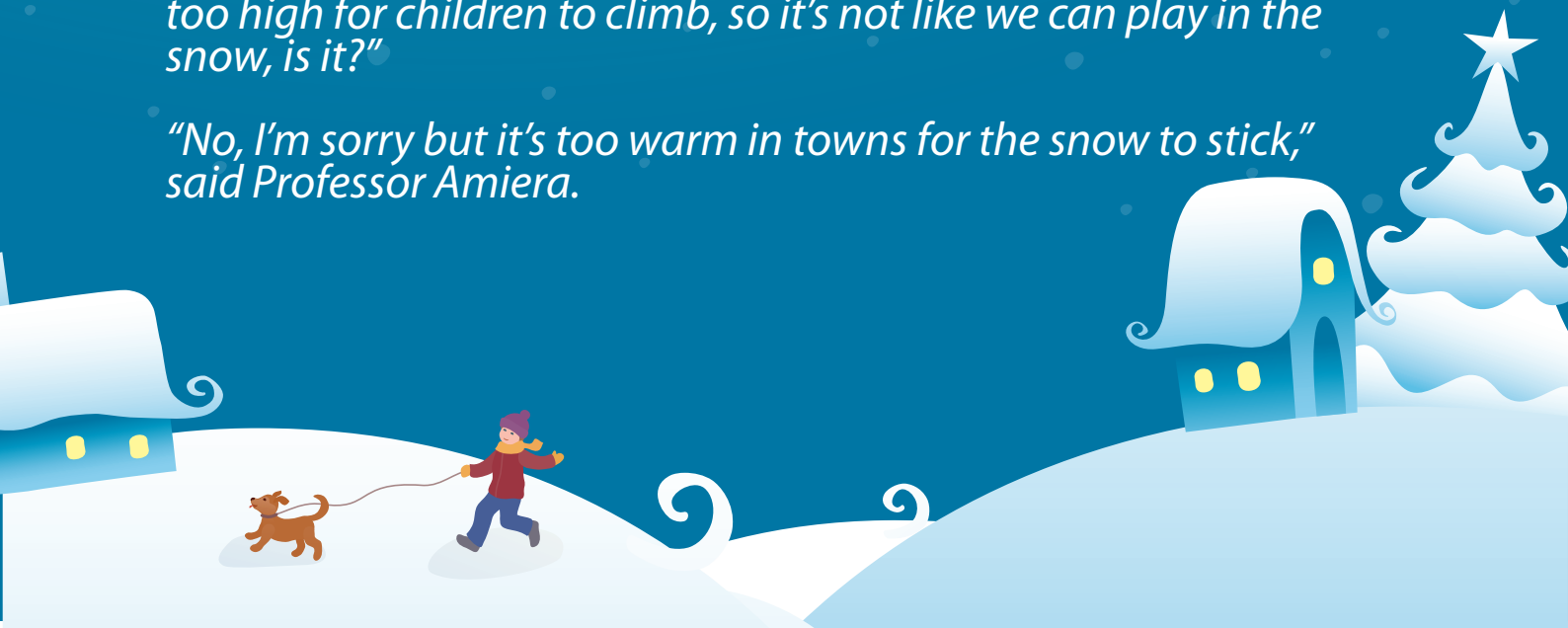
They followed the snow and watched it slowly cover the hills and mountains of Lancashire. Before long, Winter Hill, Rivington Pike, Rossendale Valley and the Pennines were covered in snow.

"It looks like a Christmas card," said Josie.

"It looks like Lapland," said Patrick.

"But it's only on the hills and mountains," said Isaac, "and they're too high for children to climb, so it's not like we can play in the snow, is it?"

"No, I'm sorry but it's too warm in towns for the snow to stick," said Professor Amiera.





The sound of sleigh bells rang out again and a flashing light in the snowmobile flashed on and off. Professor Amiera grabbed the Snow Phone and listened carefully. *"Reports of snow on roof tops of Cheshire. We have to leave, immediately!"* said Amiera.

And once again, the snowmobile sped off, darting through the sky whilst down below, mums and dads, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, scurried around to finish off their Christmas shopping in the rain.

"We're never going to find snow, are we Professor?" said Isaac.

But, before she could answer his question, little Mo took out her chalkboard and began writing. Isaac, Josie, Patrick, Sara and Seamus all sat staring in silence. Mo showed the Snow Hunters what she had written, and it simply said:

"BELIEVE"

"She's right," said Paddy. *"For a truly magical Christmas, we must 'believe' that we are going to find snow because we are The Snow Hunters!"*

They arrived in the cold sky just above Lymm and whilst silently gliding over the Dam, Professor Amiera pointed down below. *"Is that snow on the roof tops of those houses?"* she said.

Excited cheers rang out again, but they were so far away, they couldn't see the snowy rooftops clearly enough. The snowmobile scooped down and landed on the street where rooftops were white as cotton wool but as they got closer, Isaac shouted: *"That's not snow. That is cotton wool."*



The whole street glistened. Christmas lights were everywhere; Christmas trees covered in tinsel in every garden and some of the houses had what appeared to be snow on the roof. *"It's a competition to see who can decorate the house the most festively. It's not real snow – it's fake,"* said Sara.

The Snow Hunters stood and stared in disappointment and once again. Mo took the chalkboard from her pocket and the slightly smudged word revealed itself once again:

"BELIEVE"

The sound of sleigh bells rang out for the rest of the day with rumours of snow in Rochdale, Liverpool, Preston and Manchester but every time The Snow Hunters thought they were going to find snow, they failed. Snow could not be found anywhere.





Chapter Five

The snowmobile made one final attempt to find snow and travelled at speed down the M61 passing Preston, Blackburn and Horwich, then climbing up the steep Barton Bridge.

When they reached the top, Professor Amiera spoke for the final time. *"Sometimes, when things are invisible, we must imagine them. Remember when I told that you were special, like all other children? You are special because you have the power of imagination. Many grown-ups can't imagine. They've forgotten how to imagine. They are sometimes too busy with work and meetings and appointments and bills. So, let's all close our eyes and imagine what the world would look like covered in snow."*

One by one, The Snow Hunters closed their eyes and imagined awakening to the white glow of snow. They heard the excited screams of children playing, making snowballs, building snowmen and crunching snow underfoot. They could feel the cold on their cheeks.

One by one, they slowly opened their eyes and the world was covered in snow. They could see the lights of Manchester flickering in the distance and the hills of Lancashire glowing white.

"Look down there," Sara shouted, pointing to a huge, peculiar looking building with a steep sloping roof surrounded by snow. *"It's like a snow factory!"*

They all jumped back into the snowmobile and slowly floated down to where children were playing in what they thought was snow.





"It's not real," said Isaac once again, but little Mo held up her chalkboard:

"BELIEVE"

"Yeah," said Jose. *"Mo's right. You must believe!"*

They entered the building and peered in through the glass and it was then that they saw a winter wonderland. Children on sledges and skis hurtling down what looked like a huge snow mountain! Snowboarders in hoods and goggles with gloves and smiles and a Grotto surrounded by glistening snow!

"It's like Lapland," said Mo.

"WE FOUND IT – WE FOUND REAL SNOW."





Readers' Guide

The Snow Hunters is a North West Christmas Tale, commissioned by Chill Factore in Manchester, home to the only Santa's Grotto in the country on real snow.

The special tale was written by Manchester based author, Mike Garry, and inspired by school children from St Catherine's Primary in Wigan, Shoreside Primary School in Southport, Cherry Tree Primary School in Lymm and Garston C of E Primary School and St Gabriel's C of E Primary School in Liverpool. Literacy charity Grimm & Co also delivered creative writing and story telling workshops with the children during the creation of the North West Christmas Tale.

Along with The Snow Hunters, Professor Amiera and Seamus, Chill Factore hopes families across the North West will enjoy this festival tale and visit Santa's Grotto this Christmas - because at Chill Factore you don't have to imagine anymore.





#believeat Chill

