



SERIES 1 · BOOK 6

Such a Fuss, Pip

BY JC

Ages 4+

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Autumn was over. The cold had come creeping.

The leaves in the wood lay all frosted and sleeping.

The puddles lay silver, all frozen and thin.

And Pip stopped and looked at where autumn had been.



Skating on puddles, with everything freezing,

the others flew over the ice with a breezing -

a gliding and spinning and laughing, then gone.

Pip stepped on the silver and tried to move on.



Pip's feet slid apart. Pip sat down with a thump.

Got up. Stepped again. Sat back down with a bump.

Got up. Tried a long one - got three steps, then four...

then slipped, and went sideways, and sat on the floor.

"*Such a fuss, Pip. Such a fuss,*" said a voice from the bank.

The others moved past. In the cold, Pip just shrank.

Pip breathed for a moment - then got back to the ice.

The puddle was silver. And Pip would try twice.

Fox came to the bank with a warm sort of care.

"Oh, Pip - it takes time. Young Otter was there
and crossing the whole pond at your age. You'll get
there."

Fox turned - light as air, without a mistake.

Fox's words stayed behind. A cold, hollow ache.

Pip stepped on the ice. Fox was laughing, and then
turned back to Rabbit. Pip tried it again.

Both paws out - one step - then another - then three.

Pip looked up to share it. Fox didn't see.

The puddle lay silver. The morning was still.

Pip tried once again. Just the ice, and the chill.

"*Such a fuss, Pip. Such a fuss*" - Fox heard Pip's small sigh.

"You'll find it, I promise." Fox turned, moving by, back to the others. The ice held its cold.

Pip kept three small steps - a thing no one was told.

The cold grew. The grey of the afternoon pressed.

Pip slipped once again - this time harder. The rest of the day came down too, all the trying, the floor, the three steps no one saw, and a little bit more.

And the voices came easy, like cold, like a breeze:

"*Such a fuss, Pip. Such a fuss*" - carried off through the trees

and the bank and the wood and the ice and the grey.

Then the wood moved along. As it does. Every day.

Pip got up.

Left the ice.

Left the bank.

Left the cold.

Left the voices behind.

Left the afternoon.

Through the trees.

Through the grey.

Through the wood

falling dark into end-of-the-day.

To the edge where the trees started thinning to
light.

To the old hollow oak at the edge of the night,
where the warmth of the hollow reached out
through the bark.

Pip found it. And stood at the edge of the dark.

Pip came to the hollow. The old oak breathed in.

And Owl was there - as Owl always had been...

just still in the warm, in the half-dark, awake.

And all of the day came out of Pip then:

the slipping,

the floor,

the voices again,

the three steps no one saw...

all of it...

out.

Pip's voice at the hollow said all that it could.

At last Pip sat down on the warm hollow floor.

The hollow went quiet. The cold at the core
of the wood stayed outside. And Owl's wing came
near.

"I believe you," Owl said. And the hollow turned
clear.

Quiet as the ice on the puddle outside...

"You were never too much.

Not once.

Not ever.

What hurt you was real.

Your feeling, real too."

Pip didn't say anything.

Pip didn't need to.

Pip stepped from the hollow as last daylight fell.

The wood held the cold in a long winter spell.

The ice on the puddles lay dark under night.

But Pip held something, kept close, held tight...

I know what I felt.

And I know it was real.

Pip walked back through the night.

The first stars shone bright.

—

The puddle lay silver and still in the night.

Pip passed it and walked on beneath the starlight...

the wood and the dark and the cold just the same,

but Pip walked more lightly than when morning
came.

END

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*THIS STORY WAS DEVELOPED IN COLLABORATION
WITH AN AI WRITING TOOL.*