

ella
AND Olivia



For Oliver John Rijkenberg—YP

For Karen and Stella—
we miss you—DM

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By

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Illustrated by

Danielle McDonald

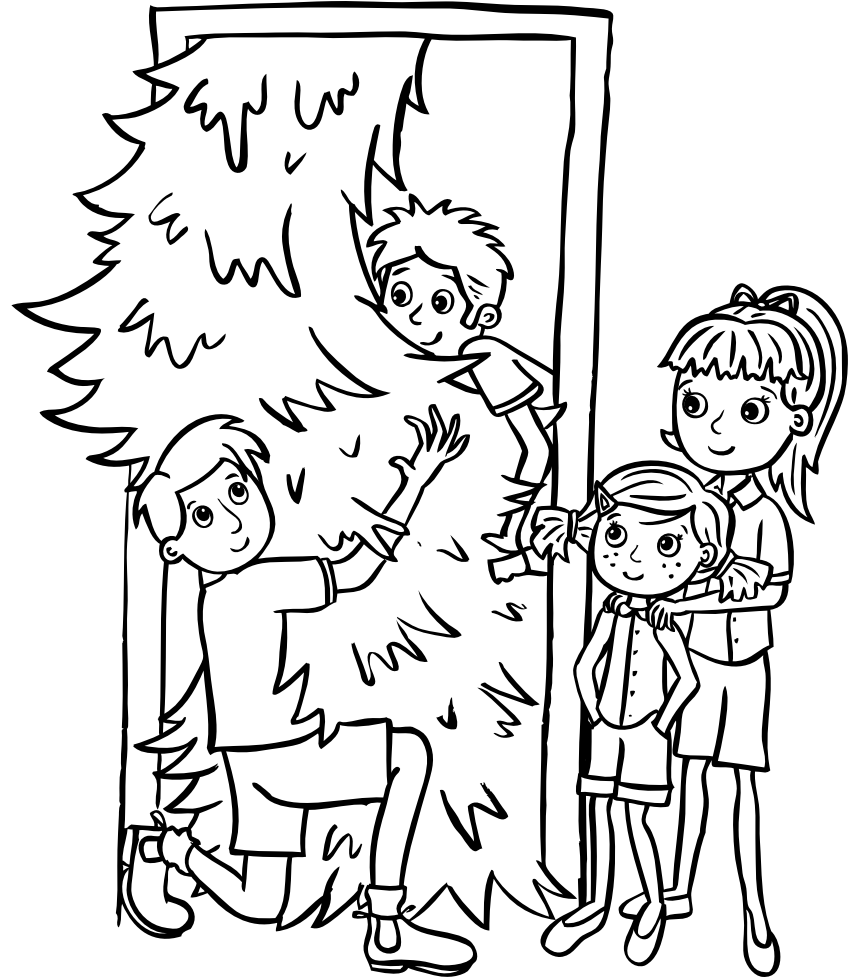
A Scholastic Australia Book



Chapter One

Ella and Olivia are sisters. Olivia is five-and-a-half years old and Ella is seven years old. Both girls have brown hair, although Ella's hair is a little bit longer than Olivia's. Ella and Olivia both have freckles across their nose, just like their mum.

It's that time of year again!
The Christmas tree is going
up at Ella and Olivia's
house. Uncle Stu and
Dad have to get it inside
first! They wrestle the tree
in the front door. They
lug it down the hallway.
Finally, they stand it up
in the special place in the
corner. It's **HUGE**, with
long green branches and a
perfect branch at the top
for a star.





Ella and Olivia love Christmas. They love the smell of the tree. They love waking up early on Christmas morning. They love giving and receiving presents. Once, they even thought they saw Santa . . .



Ella is hoping Santa will bring her some more Cool Kitties for Christmas. Olivia would like a tutu to dance in.



This year, their little brother, Max, is going to help put up the decorations. Max is just big enough now to reach the lower branches. Ella and Olivia have chosen the soft decorations for Max to hang on the tree.



Their golden retriever puppy, Bob, bounds around. ‘Woof! Woof!’ he cries.



❁

Bob sniffs and snuffles. He can't work out why a tree is inside the house. Bob is used to trees being outside, where they belong.



♥

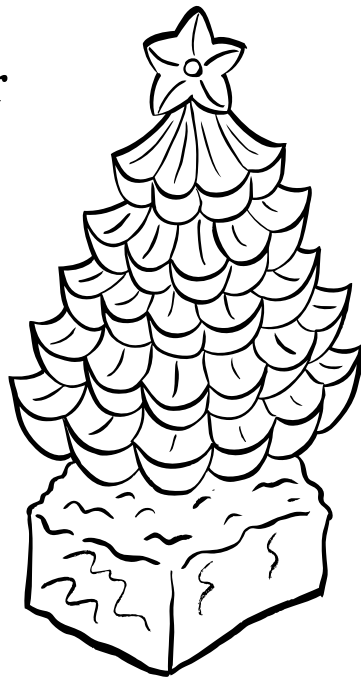
‘Well done,’ says Mum, looking at the tree once it is finally up. ‘It’s a beauty!’ Dad and Uncle Stu wipe their brows.

‘It’s a big fella, alright,’ says Uncle Stu. He adores Christmas too. Putting up the tree is hard work, but it’s one of his favourite things to do. ❁

‘The carol singers will be able to see our tree from the front door,’ says Mum.

This year, their street is holding its first Christmas Street Fair. Everyone on the street is working on something special. Mum

is organising the carols. Mr Macpherson is carving an ice-sculpture. Mrs Green is making candy canes.



Over the road, the Azzopardis already have a huge inflatable Santa on their lawn. Other families on the street have hung signs on their letterboxes that say:





But Dad's idea is the biggest, boldest and brightest. The tree is just one part of his marvellous Christmas plan.



'Did you get those lights, Stu?' he asks.

Uncle Stu nods. 'Bundles and bundles,' he says.

'Oodles and oodles!'

The two of them are very excited. They have a BIG Christmas secret planned!



'Oh dear,' says Mum. 'I don't know what you two are up to . . .'

'It sounds exciting!' says Olivia. She LOVES secrets. 'Can you tell us, Dad?' says Ella.



'Pretty please with sugar on top?' says Olivia.

'Well . . . it was going to be a surprise,' Dad begins. 'Uncle Stu and I have been planning it for months!'

