

The book cover features a vibrant pink background. On the left, a stylized, colorful cityscape with buildings in shades of teal, red, and yellow is shown. Several large, realistic-looking mangoes are scattered throughout the scene, some resting on the buildings. In the center, a circular frame with a grey border containing a repeating geometric pattern frames a pink, bat-like creature. The creature has large blue eyes, a small white horn, and is sitting on a ledge next to a mango. To the right of the frame, the title and author's name are printed in a clean, sans-serif font.

# A WOMECHIBAT STOLE MY MANGO

By Kat Bell

A large, detailed illustration of a mango is positioned on the right side of the cover, partially overlapping the white text area.



It was a steamy hot summer day in Berri. The air was thick, cockatoos were loudly squawking as they busily stripped the red gums of their leaves. The magpies hung around with the gulls' picking scraps dropped by lazy tourists.

December winds soon came blustering into town kicking up soils and sand from the surrounding farmlands. The sky now covered in dust was an eerie orangey-pink, apocalyptic haze. The main street of Berri was empty and quiet, except for the winds that were providing us with this desolate and magical, colourful day.

A lonely, well-kept 1960s Holden Brougham pulled up beside the water tower lookout. Its long sleek body stretched the length of the parking space, with the front corner scraping the curb as it pulled in.

I squirmed inside at the thought of such a beautifully kept car hitting the curb. It looked like it had been kept in a museum and polished daily.

A rickety, old man crawled out. He hobbled up the sidewalk with a cane in one hand keeping him semi-upright and on his shoulder was a small green bird, fluttering against the wind as it held on tightly for dear life, to his golfer jacket.

“Poor birdy.” I thought as I watched it flapping and desperately clinging on for life.

“I hope it doesn’t get blown away.”

The old man didn’t seem at all bothered by the wind, the sand, or the state of his birdy companion.

As I called out to the man, something bizarre happened.



This big round ring of light appeared in front of him, and he walked right through it.

I almost dropped my mango, which I had been saving for a treat. I squinted my eyes tightly a few times, rubbed them, squinted again, and looked back up the street. It was still there. This strange portal thing was hovering on the sidewalk and the old man was gone. In the old man's place, a weird little creature flew out towards the roof of the water tower.

"What the bajeezas was that?" I rubbed my eyes again. The portal was quickly closing and within seconds it was gone. I looked to the roof in search of the weird little creature. Its bat-like wings were spread wide, it had a plump fluffy pink body, a wombat nose, a sparkly horn on its head and big blue eyes that were staring back at me. I grabbed my phone to take a photo, but it flew off flapping its wings chaotically and swerving side to side like it had taken too many sips of Grandma's Christmas eggnog.

I rang my mate, Jolly. Only she would believe this wild story.





“Oh, how exciting, what did the creature look like?” Jolly asked with a bit too much delight.

“Well, it was colourful, small, round, furry and shaped — like a wombat, with bat wings, and a spike on its head.”

“Oh my, that sounds like a womechibat,” squealed Jolly, very knowingly.

“A what?” I asked.

“A womechibat.” Jolly explained that her dad had told her about the womechibat. It is a very shy creature, known only to a small group of Aboriginal groups across Australia. There have been very few sightings; mainly when there is a full moon, or during the longest day of the year. Jolly’s dad told her the womechibat’s spike is said to possess magical powers of healing and youth. “Crushed into powder, it is called the Elixir of the Fountain of Youth .

There are many bad people that would do anything to get their hands on it.” There was an air of unease in Jolly’s voice.

“I’m heading your way now.” Jolly said and hung up the phone before I could convince her she didn’t need to come all this way.

Jolly arrived in her pink mini-Morris Minor , zipping into our yard like a race-car driver, coming to a quick tactical stop. She jumped out carrying a net on a long rod and a bundle of notebooks under her arm.

“Oh my, this is so friggin exciting.” Jolly was bursting with energy, hyped on coffee and adrenaline, no doubt. She dropped the pile of notebooks on the table and quickly flicked through the pages of one of them stopping at a page with a scribbled pencil drawing.

“Is that it?” She asked, pointing at a drawing of the creature I’d just witnessed flying out of the portal.

I nodded “Yes.”





“Okay. We need to find it. We don’t want it to be captured by the wrong kind of people. We need to get it safely back to its portal.”

Jolly pulled a pair of goggles, a bundle of fruit, and a weird looking device with flashing lights and beeping noises, out of her backpack.

“Where did you last see the womechibat?” Jolly asked.

“It was flying off towards the river.”

“Okay, let’s head that way. We’ll catch its stench and then track it from there.”

Jolly really seemed to know what she was doing.

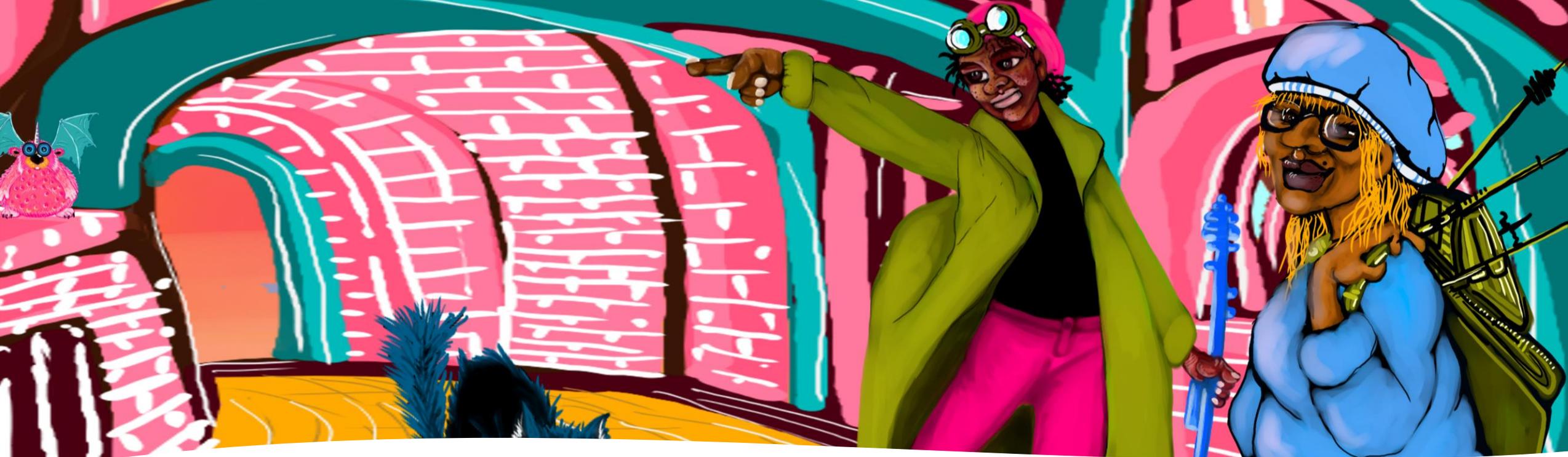
We caught track of the womechibat not far from the old pizza place. We heard a rustle in a tree. We caught sight of something sparkly in the leaves. The womechibat was hanging upside down, and its big blue eyes glowed brightly through the leaves.

“We need to coax it down with fruit and a song.” She placed a banana at the bottom of the tree and started humming a sweet tune.

“You hum, too.” She said, while nudging me gently to join her in this little hum-along.

The womechibat appeared to go into a sort-of trance and started to make its way down the tree, but then our humming was interrupted abruptly by a loud bang.





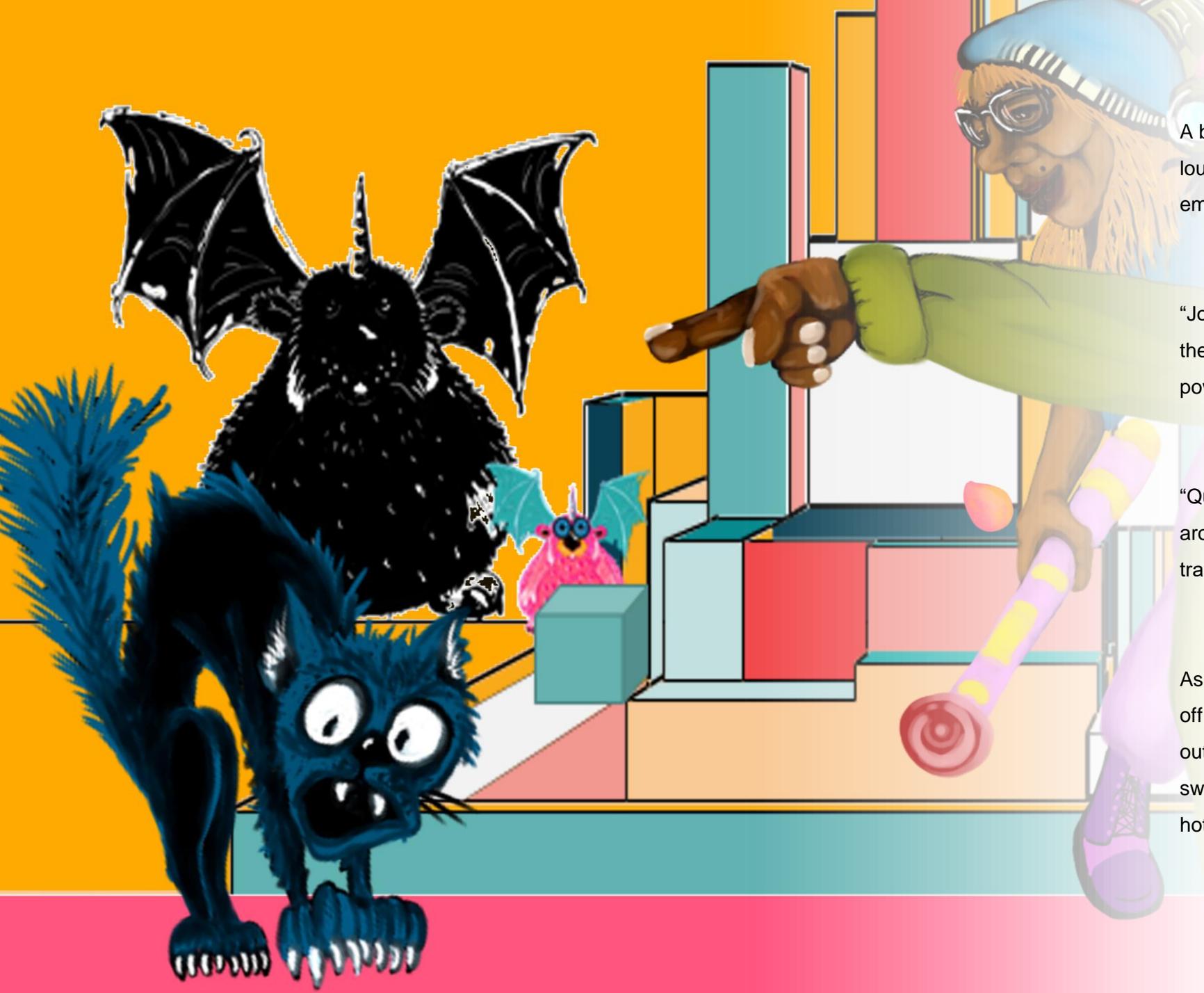
The womechibat took off like lightning and flew across the street, hiding behind a wheelie bin.

“What the hell?” yelled Jolly.

“Quick, I saw it head over there.”

We headed toward the wheelie bin when there was another loud noise, from a car hooting its horn.

The womechibat ran off like a bat out of hell into an empty lot.



A black cat jumped out in front of us, letting out a loud hiss and shrill cry as it bounded through the empty lot.

“Jolly, look.” I pointed to a shadow on the wall of the hotel. The womechibat was hiding near a power box.

“Quick. Don’t scare it off. You go that way, I’ll go around the right and open the hotel door, we can trap it in there.” Jolly pointed in various directions.

As we neared the power box, the womechibat took off, heading toward the hotel door. Jolly popped out with arms spread wide. The womechibat swerved to avoid her and ran straight into the hotel.

The hotel was full of people. A man screamed at the top of his voice. "Rat! It's a rat." People were jumping up on chairs screaming and making a fuss.

Jolly and I ran over, crawled around on the floor, and shifted chairs and people out of the way.

Then another scream came from the reception area. A staff member waved a broom in the air. The womechibat was flying in circles on the ceiling above. It stopped in a corner.

"Now we have it." said Jolly slowly edging her net towards the corner.

Before she could snare it, someone opened a door to the kitchen and the womechibat flew through the door.

"What the hell is that?" People were frantic.

"It looks like a giant flying rat."

"What is that thing on its head?"

"It's like an echidna spine or a unicorn's horn."

"Have you ever seen anything like it?" asked someone.

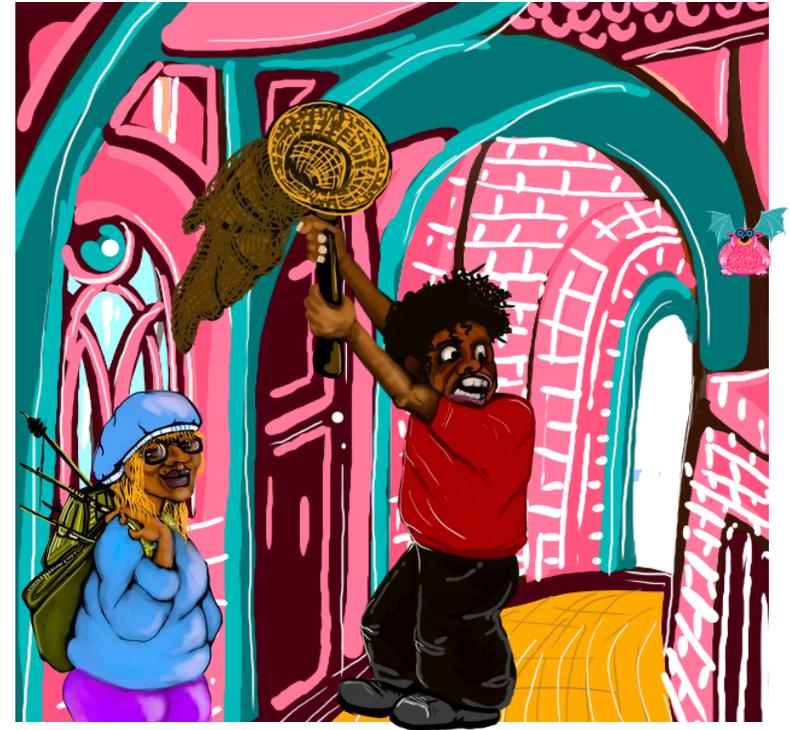


People were grabbing all sorts of things to scare the creature out of the kitchen. I don't know what came over me, but I shouted at the top of my voice "STOP. EVERYONE JUST STOP AND BE QUIET."

The place went silent.

"Okay Jolly, do your thing." I nudged Jolly shoulder to shoulder. She started humming her dulce tune again.

The womechibat went into its trance as we lured it onto the floor with fruit. The womechibat grabbed a banana, then an orange and swallowed them whole, skin and all.





“It’s kinda cute.” I said, it reminded me of my fat chihuahua, with its big googly eyes.

The kitchen door swung open and the old man with the little green bird was standing in the doorway tapping his cane on the floor.

“I see you’ve found my pet.” He said with a shrill little voice.

“Come Pip, it’s time to go home.” The womechibat scurried quickly into the old man’s arms, he closed the kitchen door and was gone.

We ran to the kitchen door, opened it, but they were nowhere to be seen.

“Where did they go?” I asked the staff member at the reception.

“Who?” She looked at me somewhat confused.

“The old man and the creature.”

“What old man and creature?”

Only Jolly and I remember that wild day.

That night I went to eat my mango that I had been saving.  
But it was gone. I searched the fridge, the pantry, the  
cupboards, everywhere, for my mango.

It was nowhere to be found.

Later that night when I climbed into bed I heard something  
crinkle under my pillow.

I rummaged around to find a neatly folded note tucked in  
the cover.

It said, "Dear Kat, thank you for the mango, I really enjoyed  
it." Signed Pip.

The womechibat stole my mango.

*Dear Kat,*

*Thank you for the  
mango.*

*I really enjoyed it.*



*PIP*

