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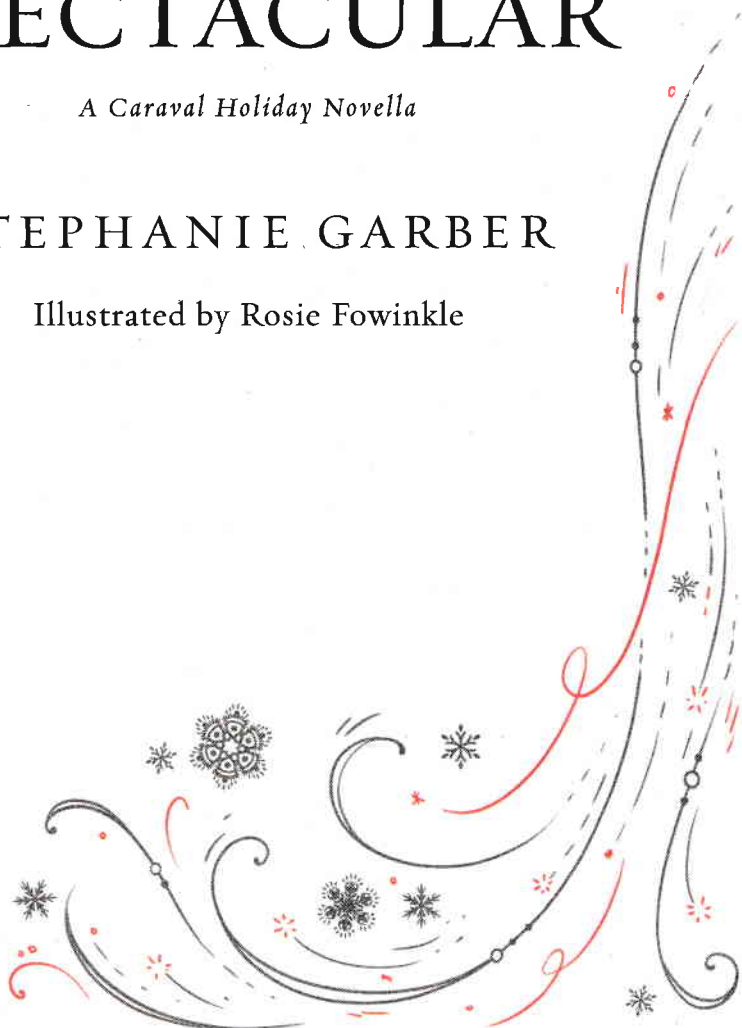


# SPECTACULAR

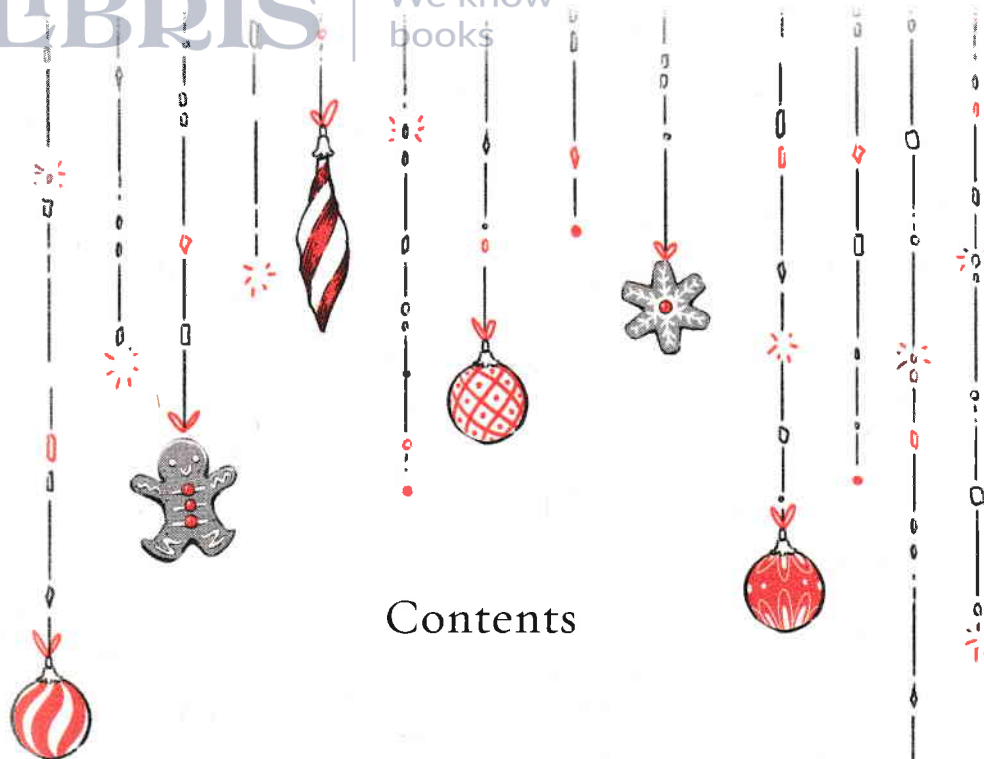
*A Carnival Holiday Novella*

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Illustrated by Rosie Fowinkle



  
HODDER &  
STOUGHTON



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## I

Snow Globes and  
Granny's Cookies

**L**ater, it would be obvious that uncanny things were afoot in the city of Valenda. Most people inside the famed city couldn't see what was happening. But, as with many things in life, those watching from the outside could see it all perfectly.

After the Great Holiday was over, ship captains who had been at sea would say, "It looked as if a great glass cloche had been placed over the whole of the

city, turning it into an enormous swirling snow globe.

I swear it on my grandpappy's teeth!"


The swearing wouldn't be necessary.

Even before the Great Holiday began, ships had already stopped arriving at Valenda's port. Although few people noticed this amid all the holiday fuss and merriment.

There was only one young sailor at the docks who thought himself too sensible for holiday cheer. He was only seventeen, but he wore a smart navy hat that made him a full two inches taller.

Unlike the rest in the city, who all seemed to have their heads stuck in candy cane clouds, this sensible sailor had noticed the missing ships, and he'd gone off to find another levelheaded person to tell. He'd marched importantly through the disturbingly festive port with a list of ships that had failed to arrive.

He wasn't going to be distracted by all the larger-than-life candy canes that now lined the streets, the spiced cider carts that seemed to be everywhere, or the people spontaneously breaking into song.



But then he saw it. Sitting in the middle of the street was an enormous gingerbread house piping cinnamon smoke out of a chimney covered in delicate curves of intricate white icing.

The sailor stopped in his tracks.

It was just like the cookie houses his granny used to make—though his granny’s didn’t have the magical cinnamon smoke, and her gingerbread houses were always far too small to step inside of. But every other detail was there. The pastel gumdrops covering the gigantic roof, the sparkling silver sugar sprinkles dusting the large windows, the swirling red-and-white peppermint candies lining the oversize door.

For a full minute, he couldn’t move.

It had been two Holidays ago that his granny had passed. And it was easier to pretend that the Great Holiday wasn’t happening than to celebrate without her.

The sailor finally shook himself. He reminded himself of what he needed to do. He needed to report the missing ships. But then the gingerbread door cracked open and he swore he heard his granny’s voice: “Come in out of



the snow, Pierre. I've made some fresh hot chocolate and your favorite cookies."

The scent of butterspice stars with nutmeg icing wafted through the air.

*Could she really be here?* thought Pierre. It was not a sensible thing to think. But Pierre was starting to think that being sensible during the Great Holiday was actually quite foolish.

"Come inside, sweet boy," Granny called.

What else was there for Pierre to do?

He couldn't resist seeing Granny once more. And he



really didn't want to say no to  
his favorite cookies.

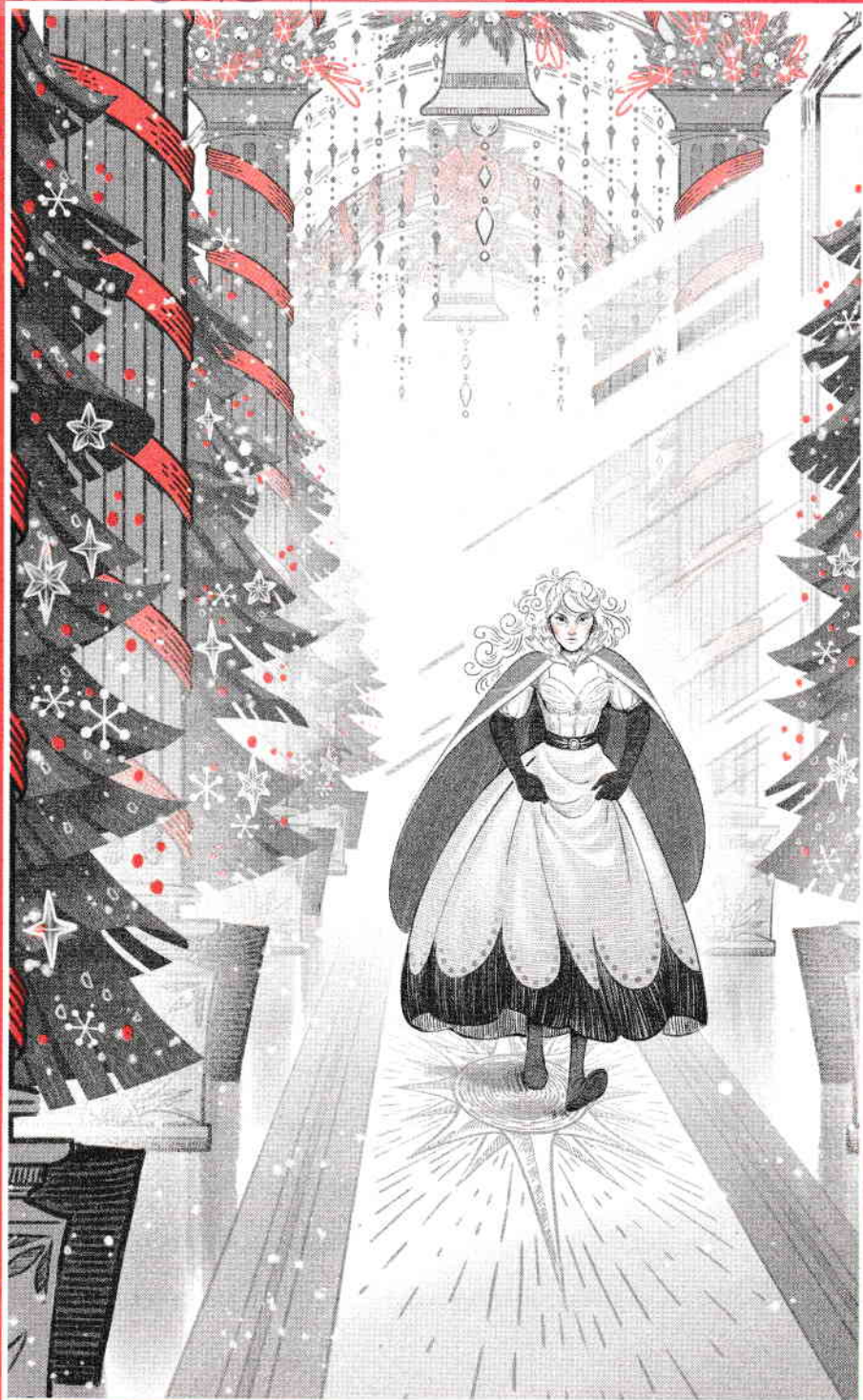
He also might have been just a little bit bewitched.

Pierre's was one of many peculiar stories that would  
spread after the Great Holiday ended.

But the most popular story, of course, would be that  
of Princess Donatella Dragna.

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## 2

## Great Holiday Eve Eve

A large, stylized red initial letter 'D' with a decorative flourish at the bottom.

Donatella Dragna was unaware that she was living underneath the dome of a giant snow globe.

All Tella knew was that it was Great Holiday Eve Eve and . . .

It was snowing inside her sister's palace?

Tella briefly stopped walking. Her frost-blue skirts swished around the toes of her shoes as the air