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# Broken Wing

*by* Paul Mason



The loch was silent that morning. The only sound was the soft slip-slop of wood meeting water. The boat pushed through the reeds, rowed by an old man – his grandson at the stern. Soft fog enfolded the vessel like a shroud, and the shoreline vanished as if it had never been there.

“What does Grandfather have in mind?” Hew wondered.

“It’s time you met Broken Wing,” the old man said.

“Broken Wing?”

“My companion. It’s time I showed you my fishing secret.”

“Is that why I was pulled from my bed so early?” the boy grumbled.

“You don’t see the others return with fish like me,” said Grandfather.

This was true. “I can’t pull these oars much longer. It’s your turn soon. Time to leave childish ways behind.”

Hew’s face reddened, and he turned away. The fog cleared for a moment, and he saw they’d crossed the loch to a small island. Cold grey stone rose from the water like a giant’s fist. The old man clicked his tongue.

“Broken Wing,” he called, “show me your face.”

A dark shape emerged from a crevice in the stone. A sleek head at the end of a long neck turned this way and that. It belonged to a large black bird. Awkwardly, the bird hopped down the rocks, one wing outstretched. The other hung useless at its side.

“Broken Wing,” said Hew.

The bird peered at him, wary. Then it hopped onto the boat. The old man ran a rough-skinned hand along the bird’s neck before taking his oar. He shoved against the rocks, pushing the boat back out into the loch.



The bird faced ahead, eyes scanning the water.  
“What can a crippled bird like that do?” asked Hew.

“More than you think,” said Grandfather.  
“She may not fly or dive, but she can see.  
And my eyes are weak, but I can still row  
and cast a line. We have an agreement.  
An oath.”

The idea amused the boy,  
not that he dared show it. But the  
old man was right about the bird.  
Hew watched as she guided their boat  
across the loch – through rolling fog –  
her neck pointing one way, then another.  
How did she know where to go? Hew peered  
into the water, but it revealed nothing.  
He sensed there was more to Broken Wing  
than mere feather and bone.

Grandfather followed the bird over one  
shoulder, steering with his oars. At last, she gave  
a loud call and bobbed her head up and down.  
The old man reached for his rod and quickly  
hooked a worm. Watching the direction of the  
bird’s beak, he cast off. The hook dropped into  
the water and slipped from sight.

On the row back to shore, three glistening fish lay  
in the hull. They were a good size, their skin pale  
and spotted. Broken Wing searched for her island,  
guiding Grandfather with her head. Hew couldn’t  
take his eyes off the strange creature. He was  
filled with unease. When the front of the boat  
nudged the rocks, the bird turned to face them.





“Give her a fish, and we’ll be on our way,” said Grandfather. He noted the boy’s sour look. “I gave her my word. And my word is your word now.”

Hew did as he was told, choosing the smallest one. But still, he wasn’t pleased. It was bad enough that Grandfather had already returned one fish to the loch by way of thanks. Hew pictured his brother and sister at the table, picking over bones. There was never enough to go round. As Grandfather carefully steered them away, Hew saw his chance. He reached over and snatched back the small fish. Then he hid it behind his back.

The old man hadn’t seen a thing – but of course the bird knew. Hew didn’t care for the way her dark gaze settled on him. He felt a rush of blood and reached down to fling a handful of water. She turned away with an angry squawk and disappeared into the mist.

Later that week, Grandfather took to his bed. His rasping breath was feeble, and the colour fell away from his skin. Hew’s mother shook her head. The old man lay beyond even her most potent remedy.

“Don’t fret, Hew,” she said, seeing her son’s tears. “It is the way of things.”

“Time and tide waits for no man,” Grandfather murmured in agreement.



Hew should have talked with Ma. Instead, he got up early the next morning. He dragged the boat down to the water before anyone knew and rowed out.

At the island, he called out as he'd seen his grandfather do. "Broken Wing, show me your face." And just like before, the bird emerged from the rock. She paused for a moment when she saw it was Hew but got on the boat just the same. Hew smiled. It seemed she'd forgotten. "Let's see if you're as good as Grandfather says."

He watched Broken Wing over his shoulder, steering the boat across the water's soft roll. She took him farther out than last time, but that was to be expected, thought Hew. Sometimes you had to move around to find the fish – even he knew that. In the thick fog, he felt like the only body in the world. He shivered and pulled his cloak close. Not for the first time, he wished it wasn't so worn and thin. Not to mind. Tonight he would put food on the table – and Grandfather would see that he was ready.

Broken Wing became still, her eyes on the water. Hew willed her to give the call. At last, the bird began to bob up and down.

“Here?” asked Hew, a little surprised. This part seemed gloomy and mysterious.

Broken Wing chirruped. “Yes, here,” she was saying.

Hew cast the line, though not as smoothly as Grandfather. The hook hit the surface and dropped from sight. Broken Wing called to the loch, and as if by magic, there was a tug. A strong heave jerked the tip of the rod.

“Clever bird,” gasped Hew.

Suddenly, the line jolted downwards with a power that frightened him. What manner of fish was this? It was a monster. But he kept his grip firm. He would not lose this beast or, worse, Grandfather’s rod.

Hew clenched his jaw and pulled back with both arms, and all at once, he was in the water. Wrenched over the side and into the icy grey. He gulped for breath, stunned by the cold, and lost his grip on the rod. It was gone in seconds. What would Grandfather say now?

Hew tried to splash back to the boat – but as he kicked out, he felt a jerk. A hand wrapped itself around his ankle ... he was sure it was a hand. Cruel fingers pressed into his skin. Hew screamed, but the fog stole the sound. He strained against the unseen thing below with all his might, and still it pulled. In desperation, he lashed out once more. At last, the icy fingers loosened their grip.

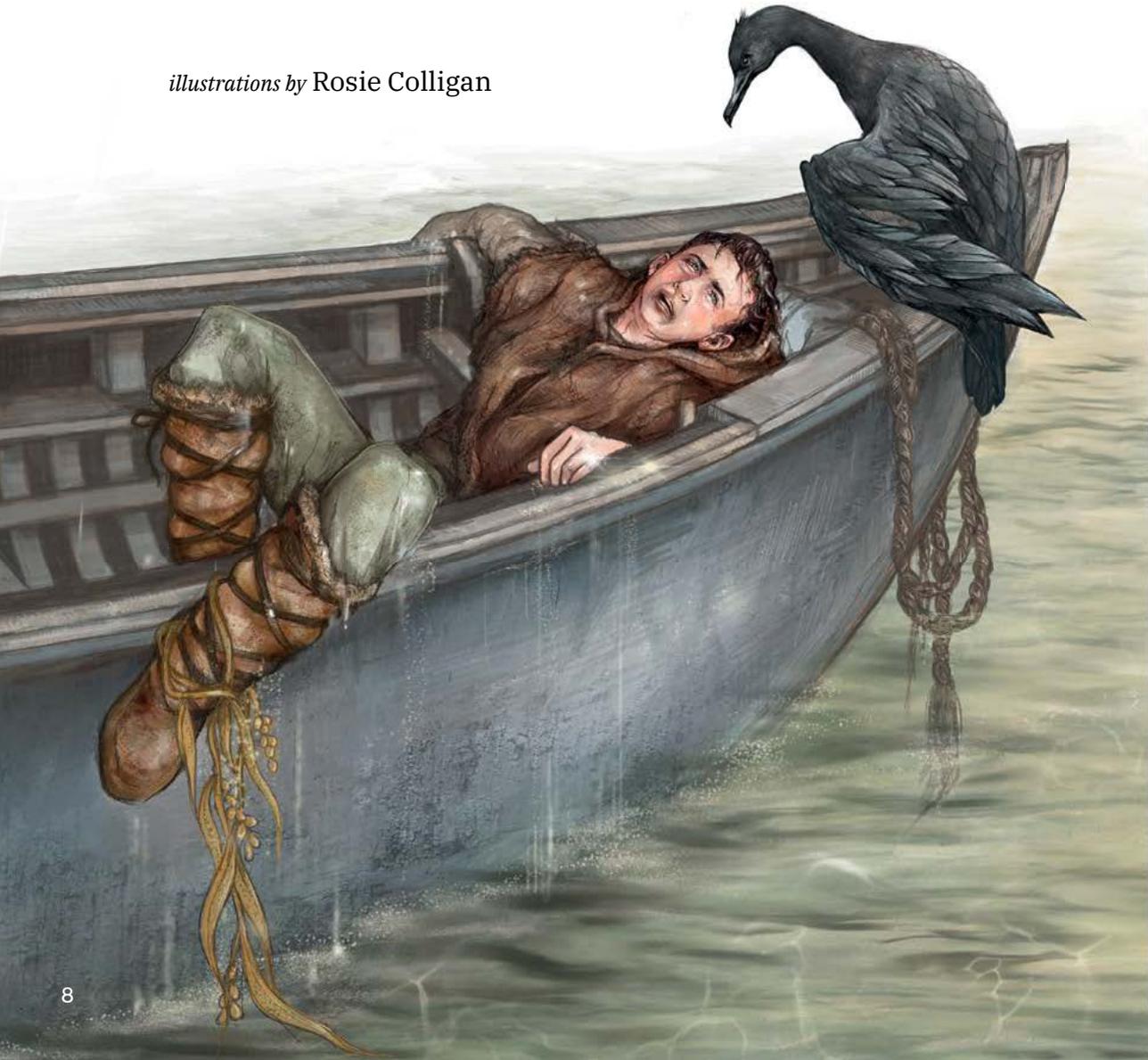


The boy swam frantically and reached the boat, heart hammering. Scrabbling at the slippery side, he heaved himself over the gunwale and clattered to the bottom, gasping for breath. Fragments of glistening weeds hung from his leg. His cloak was sodden.

From the bow, Broken Wing peered at him with dark, dark eyes. In the bird's shadowy stare, Hew caught the shape of his grandfather. The old man lay on his bed, chest rising and falling. *Time to leave childish ways behind. My word is your word ...*

"I promise," Hew managed at last.

*illustrations by Rosie Colligan*



# SPEECHLESS

by Austin Milne



One day, you may need to befriend a lion or impress a dolphin.



Unfortunately, lions can't taste sweet things, so buying them lollies is a waste of money ...

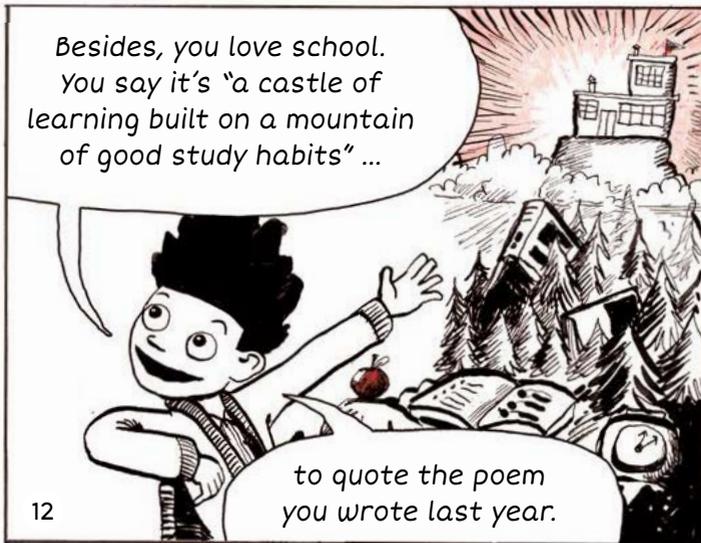
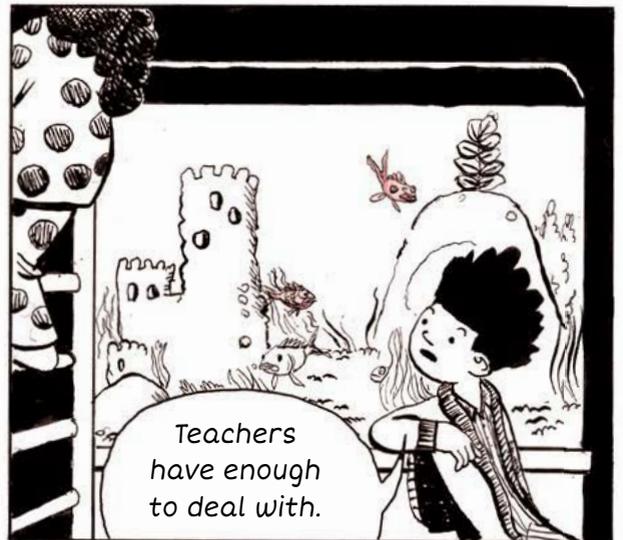
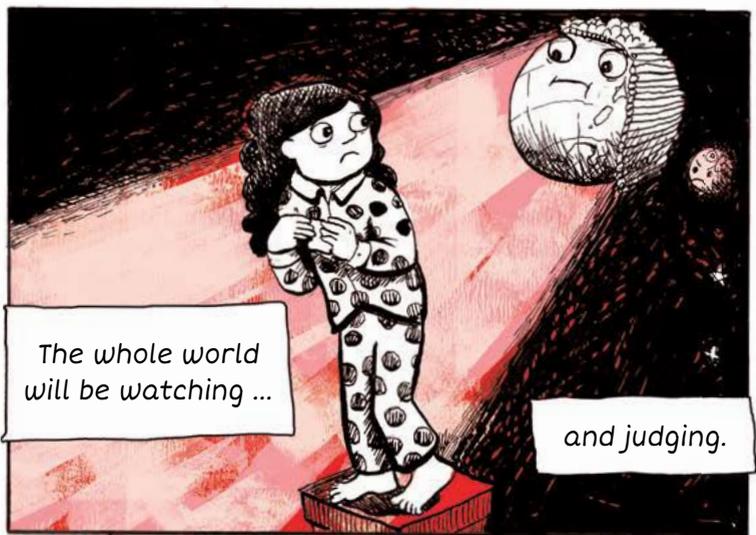


and dolphins can't taste savoury things, so making them cheese scones is a waste of effort.



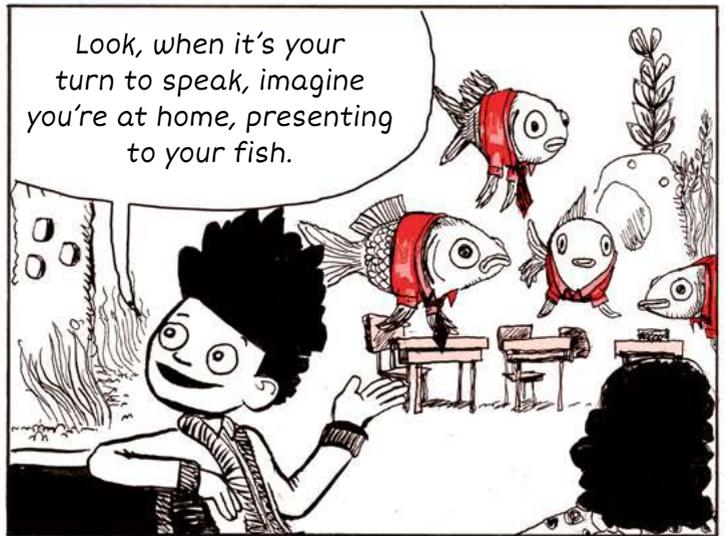








It's NOT built on a mountain of fear.



Look, when it's your turn to speak, imagine you're at home, presenting to your fish.



Or here's another idea: release a flock of ducks. No one will pay attention long enough to judge you.



Thanks. Some of that is good advice.



It's just that I'm really, really scared - tomorrow's the big day.

You're scared? You're defying gravity right now.

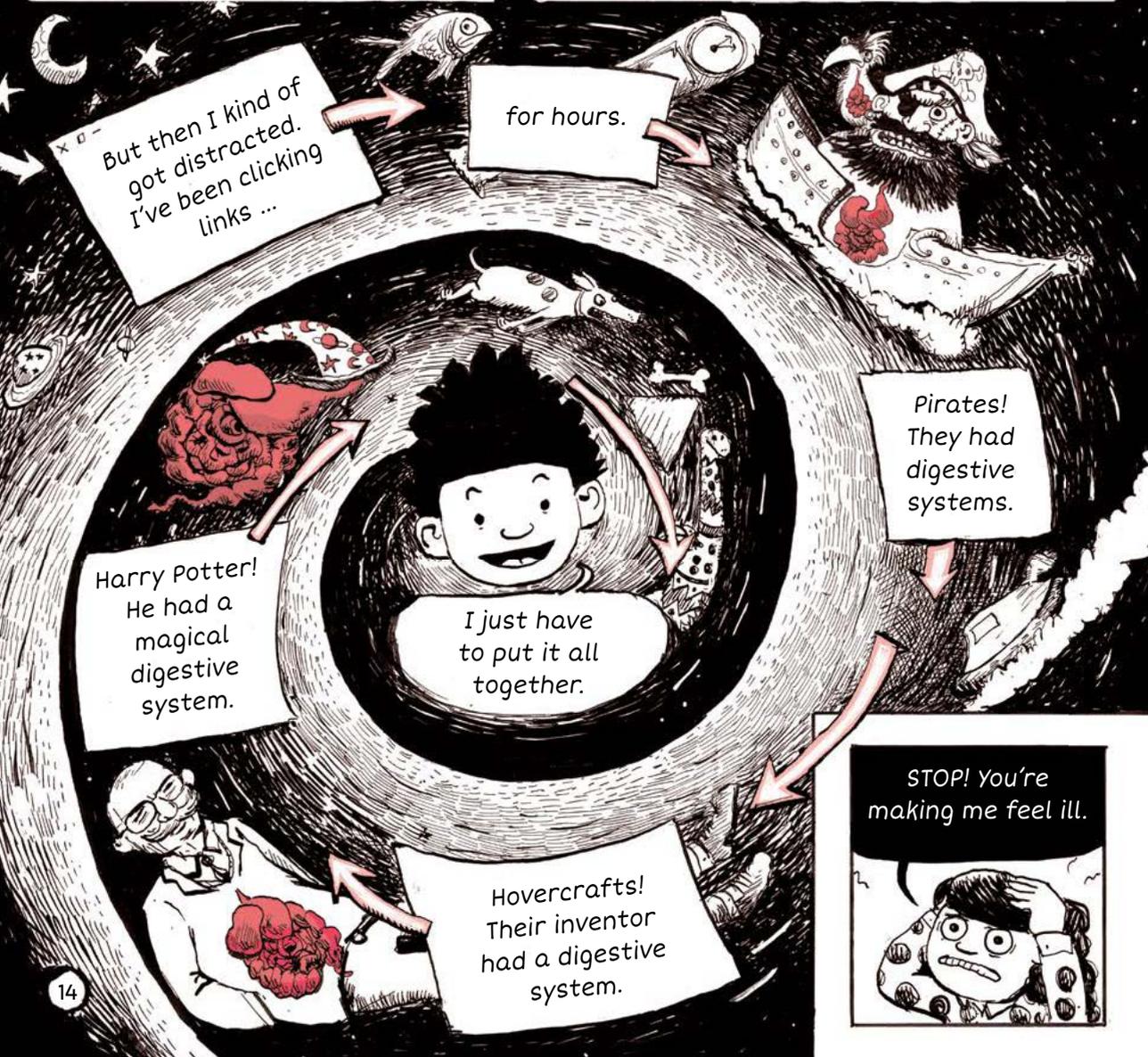
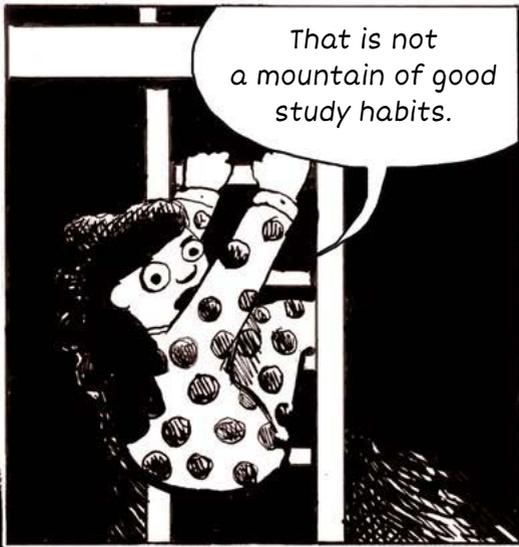


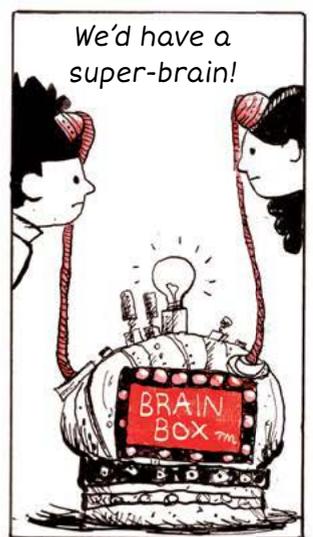
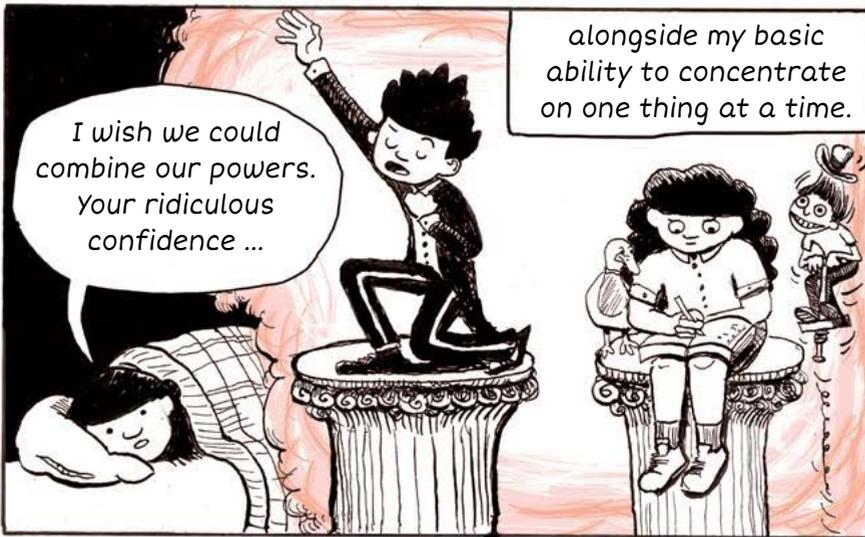
And actually, today's the big day.



What! Why are you still awake?

I've got a speech to write.





# IRIS AND DOG STAR

by Iris Marshall



28 MAY 2018

LOG AT 1200 HRS

**WEATHER:** Overcast

**WIND:** SSE, 5 knots, gusting 11

**SEA STATE:** Moderate, becoming rough,  
2-metre swell

**GPS CO-ORDINATES:** -35.235, 174.114

**DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA:** 900 nm

**COURSE:** 25 degrees

*We had our passports stamped today. A customs officer came down to the marina. After that, we were allowed to leave. We fuelled up with 400 litres of diesel, checked our gear was properly stowed, put on life jackets - and were off! We're headed for Nouméa, the capital of New Caledonia, 900 **nautical miles** (nm) to the north. Getting there should take around seven days. Now I'm sitting in the cockpit, looking out at the vast ocean. What else is out there? I'm about to find out.*

**29 MAY 2018**

LOG AT 1200 HRS

**WEATHER:** Spots of cloud, sunny

**WIND:** SW, 12 knots, gusting 17

**SEA STATE:** 4-metre swell

**GPS CO-ORDINATES:** -33.049, 173.114

**DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA:** 740 nm

**COURSE:** 15 degrees



The sea is a lot rougher today. Everyone's feeling sick. On the upside, we're seeing lots of albatrosses. One bird came in so close I saw how big it really was – the size of two bikes! Two large bikes. How crazy is that? We've also seen pods of dolphins. We stood at the bow, watching them dive under the boat.

I'm tired today. I hadn't expected it to be so noisy in the cabin. The wind's picked up now, but yesterday it was so light we had to use the engine. It rumbled all night. Then there's the noise of the water sloshing and slapping against the hull and the winches clicking when we change the sails. Plus the **autopilot** is right under my bed. It makes another kind of clicking sound, also annoying! How will I ever sleep?

We have lots of equipment onboard – not all of it noisy. The depth sounder tells us how deep the water is, and the wind gauge tells us the strength and direction of the wind. Our electronic chart plotter tells us where we are (using **GPS**), and we have paper charts in case the electronic plotter breaks. We have a life raft in case our boat sinks and an **EPIRB** to share our position with search and rescue. We also have a satellite phone, a **VHF radio**, and plain old life jackets!





## 30 MAY 2018

LOG AT 1200 HRS

**WEATHER:** *Mainly fine*

**WIND:** *SW, 10 knots, gusting 14*

**SEA STATE:** *3-metre swell easing, sea slight*

**GPS CO-ORDINATES:** *-30.977, 172.326*

**DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA:** *609 nm*

**COURSE:** *355 degrees*

*We can't see land now. It's kind of scary. The adults are starting to get grumpy. They've had two nights on watch, which means broken sleep. The person on night watch needs to make sure we sail in the right direction, the sails are properly **trimmed**, and we don't crash into other boats – not that we've seen any since leaving Northland. I can stay up till eleven o'clock because my parents are too tired to nag. It's great!*

*A big swell came up last night. Dad threw up in the first-aid kit. Luckily he managed to tip the contents onto the floor first. Dad was the first. Now we're all throwing up. It's sort of a family-bonding experience. I vomited over the side of the cockpit when a big wave came up on our starboard (right) side. I almost fell overboard. We wear a life jacket and a **tether** the whole time, but there's still a risk.*

*As I'm writing this, there's an amazing sunset over the wide, open sea.*

31 MAY 2018

LOG AT 1200 HRS

**WEATHER:** Overcast

**WIND:** S, 11 knots, gusting 21

**SEA STATE:** 1-metre swell, sea slight

**GPS CO-ORDINATES:** -28.794, 171.546

**DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA:** 472 nm

**COURSE:** 330 degrees

Today we finally caught a fish – a huge mahi-mahi! The adults were hysterical with joy. It was an amazing yellow and green, but the colour faded as it died, which I felt sad about. But I'm not going to lie. The fish was delicious.

Everyone's feeling heaps better. The sun is shining, we saw dolphins again, and our bodies are getting used to the motion. Plus the **swell interval** is high, so there's much less movement. We sailed today without using the engine. We have two sails: the mainsail and the headsail. Sometimes, if it's super windy, we have to **reef** the sails. That way, Dog Star won't get overpowered by the wind and lean over. This is starting to feel like fun.



1 JUNE 2018

LOG AT 1200 HRS

**WEATHER:** Nasty

**WIND:** NW, 28 knots, gusting 40

**SEA STATE:** Very rough

**GPS CO-ORDINATES:** -27.185, 169.859

**DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA:** 340 nm

**COURSE:** 307 degrees

Last night, I was woken by the sound of sloshing water and shouting. I got up and found the adults frantically bailing water in the engine bay. Mum said it was just a small leak from a hose. She told me to go back to sleep. Seriously? I could see the look on my parents' faces. Was it bad enough for a **mayday**? Should I set off the EPIRB?

"It's OK, just a few sloshes of water," Dad said. "No drama."

I checked our course on the autopilot and tried not to worry because clearly it was a drama. Too much water could flood the engine, and we'd sink. When I next checked, my parents seemed much happier. The water had almost gone.

We're all tired after last night's excitement. The adults don't want to talk. They're just looking out to sea, trying not to regurgitate their dinner. We can see a big rain cloud headed our way.



## 2 JUNE 2018

### LOG AT 1200 HRS

**WEATHER:** Frequent squalls

**WIND:** W, 32 knots, gusting 42

**SEA STATE:** 3-metre swell,  
very rough

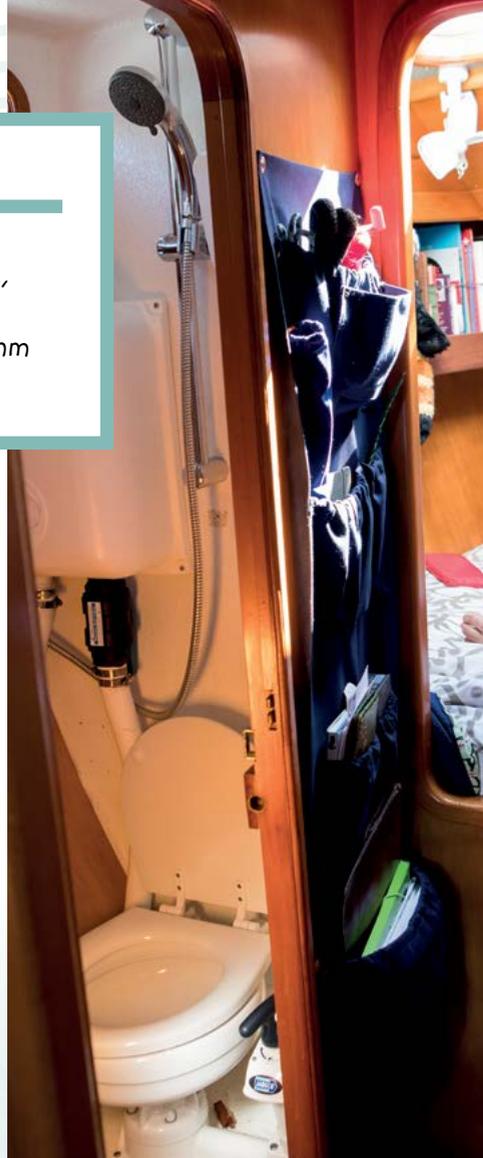
**GPS CO-ORDINATES:** -25.462,  
168.849

**DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA:** 223 nm

**COURSE:** 333 degrees

It was really rough today. I had to brace myself each time a big wave came so I wouldn't crash to the floor. I have lots of bumps and cuts. No one dared go down the stairs; it was impossible to stay upright. Besides, we're all feeling too sick. We can't use the stove in the **galley** to make a cup of tea because we might spill boiling water. Everyone's worn out.

Still no other boats about. It's a bit scary being out here all alone.





**3 JUNE 2018**

LOG AT 1200 HRS

**WEATHER:** Frequent squalls

**WIND:** WSW, 30 knots,  
gusting 40

**SEA STATE:** Rough

**GPS CO-ORDINATES:** -23.890,  
167.887

**DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA:** 115 nm

**COURSE:** 271 degrees

Two-minute noodles and a banana for breakfast. It's still rough, and we still feel a bit spewy. I got better as the day went on and made toast for dinner. Then I stayed down in the cabin, reading and watching *The Simpsons*. I used earplugs so I didn't wake Dad. He's trying to catch up on sleep a metre away.

In case you're wondering, there's no space on a boat. My parents' bed, the shower, the toilet, the galley sink ... everything is right next to everything else. I don't have a door on my cabin, just a curtain, and my bed is a tiny triangle. If I'm feeling cramped, I sit outside on the deck, where the view goes on forever. I'm making the most of it. We should see land soon.



**4 JUNE 2018**

LOG AT 1200 HRS

**WEATHER:** Clearing

**WIND:** WSW, 25 knots, gusting 32

**SEA STATE:** Rough

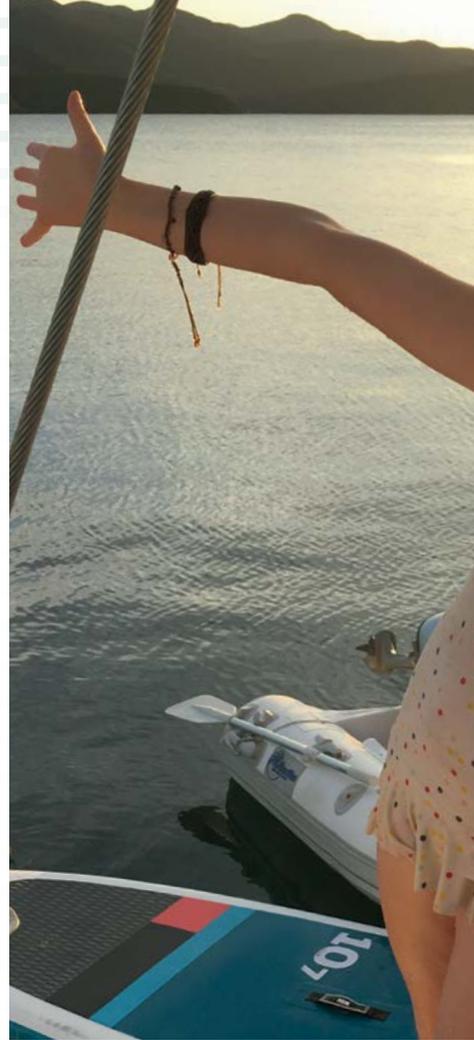
**GPS CO-ORDINATES:** -22.389, 166.180

**DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA:** 7 nm

**COURSE:** 278 degrees

We've arrived. It took a day to reach Nouméa after we first spotted land. We sailed up the coast feeling so excited. Solid ground! When we got to the marina, we used our radio to contact the New Caledonian officials. Then we put up our yellow flag. This signals we've come from another country and need clearance from customs, biosecurity, and immigration.

Mum found more water in the **bilge**. She says it's from the leak. We'll have to pull out all our gear and clean off the rust and grime. So much work - but she said we'd worry about that in the morning. Instead, we went out for pizza. So good after a week of toast, crackers, and fruit. We sat around in the warm air, surrounded by people and noise and unfamiliar smells. The change to being on land is extreme. It's like coming inside on a freezing night and having a hot bath. Tomorrow, after cleaning, we'll start to explore.





## GLOSSARY

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**autopilot:** an electronic steering system

**bilge:** the lowest part in a boat

**EPIRB (electronic position indicating radio beacon):** a device that shows rescuers where you are if you're in trouble or have abandoned a ship

**galley:** the kitchen on a boat

**GPS (Global Positioning System):** a satellite-based navigation system

**mayday:** a radio distress signal used by ships and aeroplanes

**nautical mile:** a unit for measuring distance at sea (1,852 metres)

**reef:** to make a sail smaller, usually because of strong wind

**swell interval:** the amount of time between waves

**tether:** a rope people use to keep themselves tied to a boat

**trimmed:** set just right for the wind

**VHF (very high frequency) radio:** a radio that people use to talk to one another



# WORDS

I don't know why, but Callum always groaned or said something like "Useless" or "Loser" whenever we were in the same game or group.

One lunchtime, our games ran into each other, and he called me a \_\_\_\_\_.

Some kids laughed, and I could feel

my face getting hot. I didn't know what to say. Callum could see this, and he said it again. My dumbness spilled into my eyes.

"Shut up," I said. Callum smirked and said "Shut up" in a voice that was meant to sound like mine, adding the name he'd just called me.

Then he began to chant it. I put my foot behind his leg and pushed him so he fell backwards onto the concrete.

"Leave him alone," someone said, looking at me as the duty teacher arrived and marched us both to the office.

I wasn't crying. I wasn't.

"He shoved me over," said Callum.

"You called me a ... a name," I said.

"We don't tolerate fighting," said Ms Kelly.

"You need to learn to ignore people who say things you don't like. Defend yourself with words.



And Callum, don't tease people."  
Then we had to use our words to apologise  
and our handshake to settle the matter.

But it wasn't settled. Callum kept  
calling me the name. He told his friends  
so they'd say it, too. Sometimes he'd

mouth it or make a sign with his hands  
that meant the name. The more I ignored him,  
the more he'd make a dart of it to throw at me.

One day, Mr Martin was calling the roll,  
but at Callum, he got his letters muddled  
and called out "Laccum".

Everybody laughed, even Callum's friends.  
"Are we lacking Laccum?" Mr Martin joked.  
"No, Laccum's here," hooted loud Ed.

Callum was trying to disappear into his desk.  
From then on, Laccum became his evil twin,  
jumping out at him whenever.

"You're *hilarious*, Laccum," I said  
the next time he called me a \_\_\_\_\_,  
which he did less and less.

You couldn't say Laccum without smiling.  
It was silly. It was empty.  
It was perfect.

James Brown



# Whānau

by Whiti Hereaka



**T**imi sees his māmā again. She’s wearing the black dress and black cardy she wore to Koro’s tangi. She leans down to hug him goodbye. The wool is soft, and she smells of sweat, rose soap, and lipstick.

“Take care of Nan,” she says. “Haere me taku aroha, e tama.”

She kisses Timi on the cheek, and he rubs at the sticky mark. Now his palm is red. He tries wiping it clean so he can take Māmā’s hand, but she’s turning away ...

Timi wakes up. His face is wet, and he wipes it. Can’t let Joe see he’s been crying. He hopes he hasn’t woken him. Sometimes, the dreams make him call out – they’re so real. But it’s OK. His cousin mutters something in his sleep and rolls over. Joe’s home for the holidays, and he gets up early to help with the milking.

Timi reaches down to feel the sheet. Dry. The first time he mimied the bed, he'd tried to hide it from Nan, stuffing the sheets into the washing machine by himself. He'd used too much soap powder and flooded the wash house with bubbles. But Nan wasn't mad. She'd hugged him and said it was OK. "We'll clean up together," she said. It was still embarrassing when he wet the bed, but Nan never made him feel bad. She said it would just take a bit of time.

Timi tries to go back to sleep, except he's worried. What if he has the dream again? Besides, he's thirsty. He decides to get up.

When Timi first came to live with Nan, he crashed into things in the night. Now Nan leaves the hall light on. Her place is starting to feel like home. He likes being on the farm, helping. He collects the eggs and feeds the chooks and weeds the tomatoes – all the jobs Joe did before he went to boarding school. Timi misses Māmā, but the funny thing is if he went back to live with her, he'd miss Nan – and Joe, even though he's a tease. Can you be homesick for two places at once? Timi wonders.



He's almost reached the kitchen when he hears a noise coming from Koro's armchair. Nan is there, wrapped in Koro's special blanket.

"E tama. What are you doing up?"

"I can't sleep." The floorboards are cold. Timi's feet are cold. He wishes they were tucked under Koro's blanket.

"Sit here," Nan says, pointing to the chair. "I'll warm you some miraka."



Nan wraps the blanket round Timi. It smells like Koro. Timi remembers sitting on his lap when he was little, listening to stories and looking at the hairs in Koro's nose. When Timi was older, they'd played cricket and gone fishing. There was none of that now.

"I miss him, too," Nan says as she goes to the kitchen. She can always tell what's on Timi's mind.

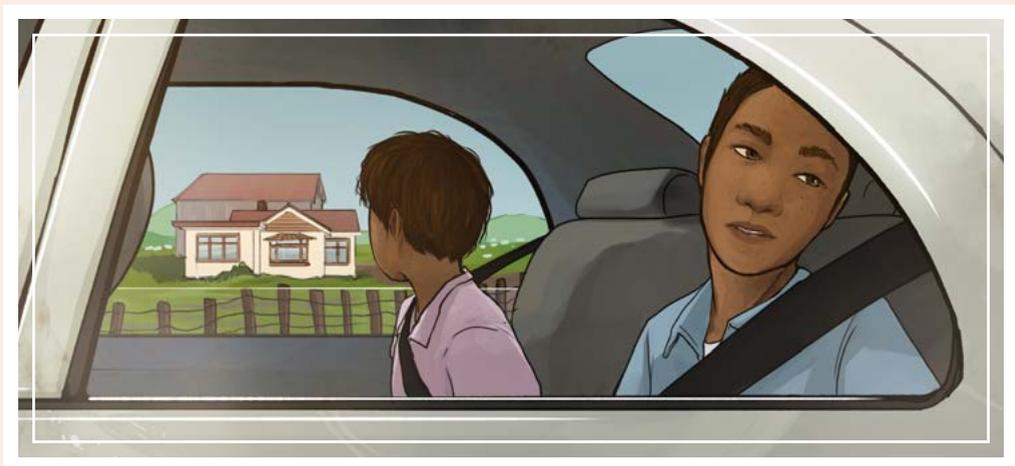
It's dark in the sitting room. And cosy. He feels sleepy.

The sun's well up when Timi wakes. For a moment, he wonders if seeing Nan last night was another dream. Then he sees Koro's blanket. Nan must have carried him back to bed. Or maybe Joe. He'll tease Timi about it. Joe's almost thirteen, not that much older than Timi, but he thinks he's a big deal. He's been at boarding school a term. He likes that Timi has to go to the local school with all the little kids – the same one he went to.

Timi gets dressed and goes to the kitchen for breakfast. Nan's stirring porridge. "Mōrena, Timi. Set the table. Joe will be in soon. We're going out after breakfast," she adds. "You'll need to spruce yourself up."

They hardly go anywhere. Timi eats quickly, wondering where they're going. Maybe into town to see a movie? Or bowling? Not the kind Koro used to play but ten-pin bowling, with the special shoes and hot chips with tomato sauce after.

"Slow down," scolds Nan. "You'll get a sore puku."



They don't go far – just the Toole's place. A sheep farm. Joe rolls his eyes at Timi. They got dressed up just to see one of Nan's friends and her hipi?

"Kia ora, tātau," Mrs Toole says.

"Kia ora, Alice," Nan says, kissing Mrs Toole on the cheek.

"Kuhu mai. They're out this way ..."



Timi has no idea what Mrs Toole's talking about, but they follow her outside to a shed. In the corner, there's a box, and inside the box is a dog with floppy ears, surrounded by her babies. Timi's never seen puppies before. They squirm about making funny noises. It's hard to tell if they're upset or playing.

"I'm so grateful you can take one, Tilly," Mrs Toole says. "There are far too many for me to keep."

"Go on." Nan nudges Timi towards the box. "Pick one."

Timi doesn't like dogs. Not really. They're too loud and jumpy. He does his best to keep away from Nan's three farm dogs – Tahī, Rua, and Toru – but they're always following him round.

Timi picks out the smallest, quietest pup. It's mostly black with a bit of white on its face, and it has a pink nose and brown eyes. Talking softly, he gently picks the puppy up.

Mrs Toole looks doubtful. "Are you sure about that one, love?" she asks. "He's the runt."

Timi nods and holds the little dog closer.

Joe rubs the dog's ears. "What are you going to call him?"

Timi doesn't know.

They set up a bed in the wash house. Nan finds a basket. Then she puts a blanket in the basket and tucks a hottie and an alarm clock under the blanket. Timi understands the hottie – but the clock?

"It feels like a heartbeat," Nan explains. "It means the puppy won't miss its mother."

"Poor little guy," Timi says. He wishes a clock would help him.

“It’ll be OK,” Nan says, scratching the little dog behind the ear. “He’ll settle. There’s plenty of love in this house.” Nan’s eyes are sad, but she’s smiling at Timi. She takes his hand and gives it a little squeeze, then kisses him on the forehead. Timi squeezes Nan’s hand back.

Timi wakes in the middle of the night. It’s the puppy – he’s whining. He slips out of bed, quietly, so he doesn’t wake Joe, and puts on his warm socks and slippers.

When he opens the wash house door, Timi smells it – the puppy has wet his bed. “It’s all right, boy,” Timi says, lifting the basket outside. “I’ll take care of you.”

Timi goes inside and grabs the special blanket from Koro’s chair. He can hear the puppy, still crying. Back in the wash house, he sits on the floor and leans against the wall.

He picks up the dog and tucks him close to his chest. “I’m not the same as your māmā, I know. It’s all right to miss her. But we can be your whānau, too.” The puppy sighs and yawns and snuggles closer. “Having more people to love you is a good thing,” Timi adds. “Now you’ve got me and Nan and Joe.”

Timi yawns, too, and pulls the blanket round them both. He feels sleepy now, really sleepy.

“We need to give you a name,” he says.

Timi’s been thinking about this.

“What about Whā?”

But Whā’s asleep. Timi can feel the little dog’s heartbeat, ticking like a clock.

**illustrations by Bo Moore**



# UNWANTED VISITORS

by Allan Burne

**You've been on holiday to Sāmoa. Now you're back in New Zealand, waiting to go through customs. You've filled in a passenger arrival card – and no, nothing to declare. One of the quarantine officers has a sniffer dog, a cute beagle, making its way down the queue. Eventually, the beagle reaches you. The dog seems interested in the pocket on your backpack, and that's when you remember ... yesterday's mango!**

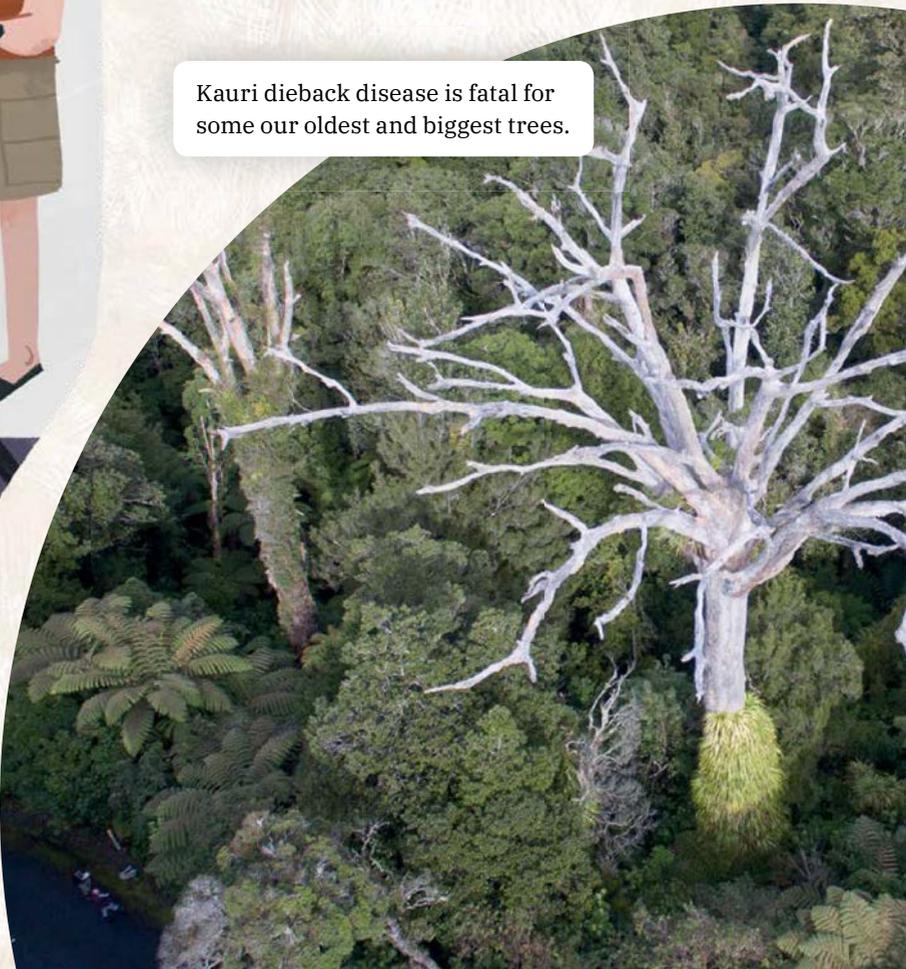
New Zealand has strict rules about what can be brought into the country. Some things, like that mango, are an obvious risk. It might be hiding fruit flies that could multiply and wipe out an entire crop – many kinds of crops, in fact. But unwanted stowaways can slip through the border in all kinds of ways. Tramping boots, dairy products, and even honey can hide species that might harm the environment, the economy, or people's health. Protecting a country against this risk is called biosecurity.



# What We Protect

New Zealand's environment is made up of forests, grasslands, rivers, lakes, coastlines, mountains, and wetlands. All these places contain plants and animals that are special to our country – but unwanted pests, weeds, and diseases endanger them. Some introduced pests feed on native plants and animals or compete for food and territory. Others spread disease, choke waterways, and damage forests. Without biosecurity, many of New Zealand's precious natural assets would be destroyed.

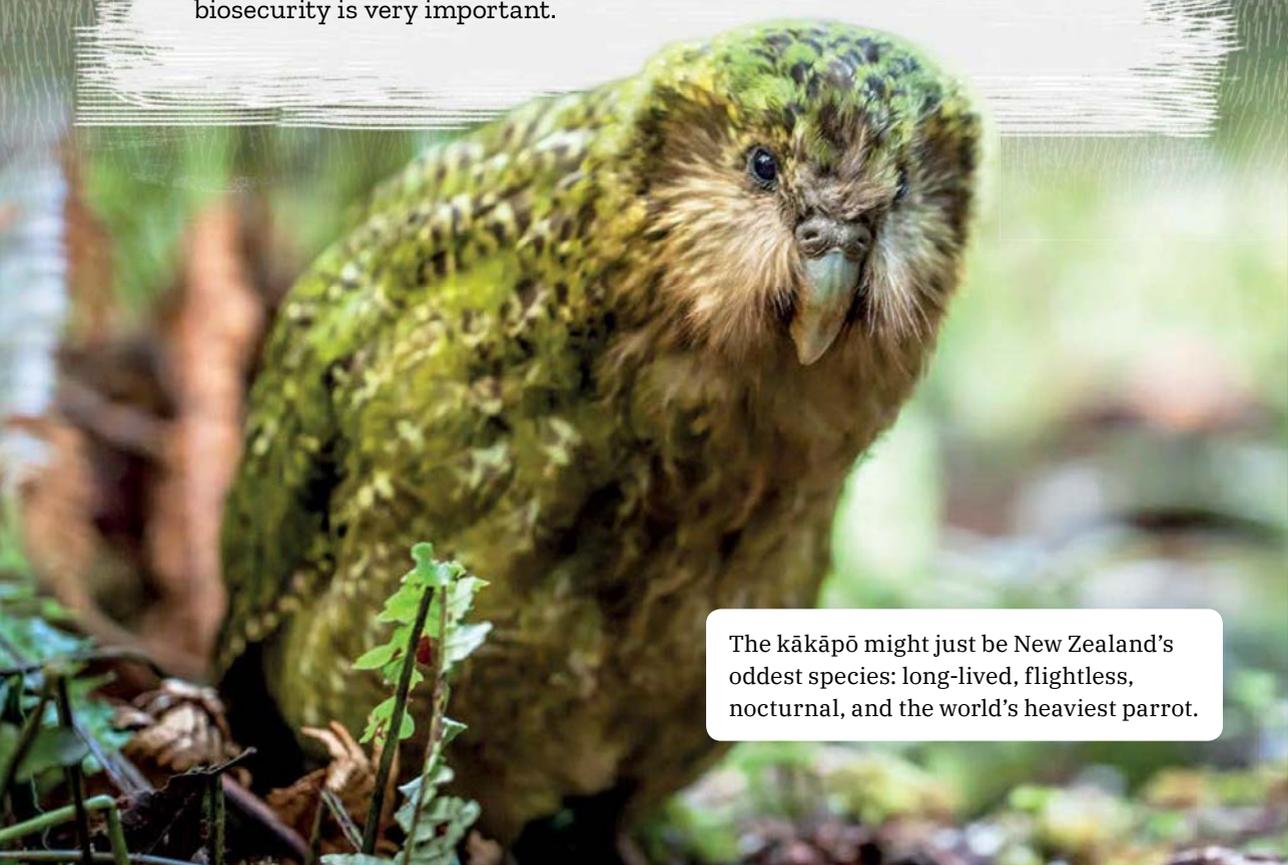
Kauri dieback disease is fatal for some of our oldest and biggest trees.



## UNIQUE NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand became a group of islands around 83 million years ago. This isolation means our native flora and fauna developed in unusual ways. Entire groups of animals found in other countries are almost non-existent here. New Zealand has only two native land mammals – both are species of bats – and no snakes (we have only one poisonous native animal, the katipō spider). Other groups of animals are unusually large – we have dozens of kinds of wētā and so many seabirds we've been called the seabird capital of the world.

The list of oddities continues. New Zealand has giant snails, giant parrots, and giant buttercups. Many of our native species live for a long time, and we have a huge variety of flightless birds. Some scientists say that studying biology in New Zealand is like studying life on another planet. However, this uniqueness comes with a problem. Most of our native species evolved without predators, which means they can't defend themselves very well. Because they are so vulnerable, having good biosecurity is very important.

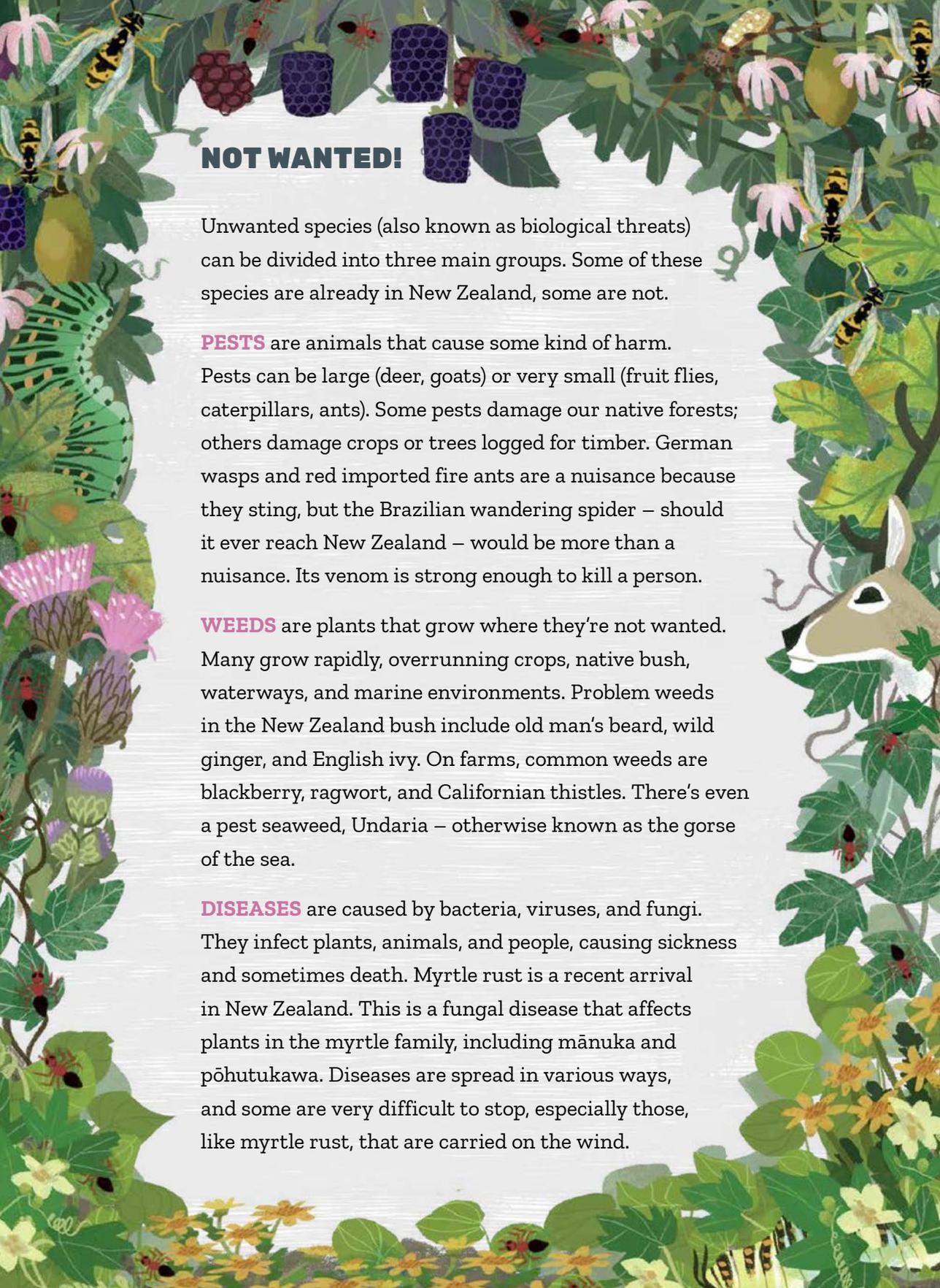


The kākāpō might just be New Zealand's oddest species: long-lived, flightless, nocturnal, and the world's heaviest parrot.

Biosecurity laws also protect our economy. Each year, New Zealand earns billions of dollars selling goods overseas, especially dairy products, meat, wood, honey, and fruit. But our main industries – agriculture, horticulture, and forestry – are vulnerable. Just one undeclared apple could carry enough fruit fly larvae to start a population. If they became established, some fruit fly species could affect 80 percent of our horticulture crops. Foot and mouth disease, spread by muddy boots and camping gear, is a major threat to agriculture. There's no cure for this disease, which affects farm animals such as cows, sheep, and pigs. A foot-and-mouth outbreak in New Zealand would be disastrous, costing millions of dollars and thousands of jobs.

Tourism is another important industry in New Zealand. Around 4 million people visit each year. Most come to enjoy our unique environment, which biosecurity laws protect.





## NOT WANTED!

Unwanted species (also known as biological threats) can be divided into three main groups. Some of these species are already in New Zealand, some are not.

**PESTS** are animals that cause some kind of harm.

Pests can be large (deer, goats) or very small (fruit flies, caterpillars, ants). Some pests damage our native forests; others damage crops or trees logged for timber. German wasps and red imported fire ants are a nuisance because they sting, but the Brazilian wandering spider – should it ever reach New Zealand – would be more than a nuisance. Its venom is strong enough to kill a person.

**WEEDS** are plants that grow where they're not wanted.

Many grow rapidly, overrunning crops, native bush, waterways, and marine environments. Problem weeds in the New Zealand bush include old man's beard, wild ginger, and English ivy. On farms, common weeds are blackberry, ragwort, and Californian thistles. There's even a pest seaweed, *Undaria* – otherwise known as the gorse of the sea.

**DISEASES** are caused by bacteria, viruses, and fungi.

They infect plants, animals, and people, causing sickness and sometimes death. Myrtle rust is a recent arrival in New Zealand. This is a fungal disease that affects plants in the myrtle family, including mānuka and pōhutukawa. Diseases are spread in various ways, and some are very difficult to stop, especially those, like myrtle rust, that are carried on the wind.

# Border Control

With so much at stake, New Zealand needs strict biosecurity laws. The main aim of these laws is to stop pests, weeds, and diseases from arriving in the first place. A lot of work happens at our mail centres, ports, and airports – known as the border. Here, biosecurity officials check everything arriving in the country. At airports, this means checking people and their luggage. At ports, officers mostly check cargo on container ships, although cruise ships are also inspected.



New Zealand has twenty-three ports, where millions of tonnes of goods arrive each year.

Our biosecurity system uses all kinds of methods to stop unwanted species from entering the country. The cabins of planes arriving from overseas are sprayed with **insecticide**, and most people have seen the X-ray machines and sniffer dogs at airports. These are used to detect fruit, vegetables, and other illegal goods that haven't been declared. Educating travellers about biosecurity is an important part of the process, too. Passenger arrival cards and signs remind people to declare risk items, and new technology, such as displays that use holograms, provides fresh ways for getting the message through.

## STINKY AND SNEAKY



We hear a lot about fruit flies ... but what about the brown marmorated stink bug? This determined pest, originally from Asia, has tried sneaking in many times. Stink bugs hide in nooks and crevices, making them hard to see, and they are difficult to kill with insecticide. Stink bugs wreak havoc. They feed on at least three hundred different plants, including apples, pears, grapes, peaches, kiwifruit, and soya beans. In some places, the bug has wiped out entire crops. Their final crime? In winter, stink bugs come inside to shelter from the cold – and as their name suggests, they stink!

## Beyond the Border

No system is perfect, and sometimes unwanted species slip through. When this happens, biosecurity officials work to limit their spread and damage. Sometimes, special rules are enforced until a situation is brought under control. If **eradication** isn't possible, people are told how they can help contain the threat. For example, when didymo was discovered in the South Island, signs were put up reminding people to clean their boats and fishing gear to help prevent this waterweed from spreading. In more recent times, a similar campaign has been trying to educate people about kauri dieback disease.



Looking for unwanted species, and keeping watch over those already here, is called **surveillance**. This kind of work is another important part of our biosecurity system. A lot of surveillance is done by scientists, either by collecting data in the field or analysing samples in laboratories. The Animal Health Laboratory in Upper Hutt analyses over 37,000 specimen samples each year. New Zealand also has pest-management programmes. These focus on high-risk pests and diseases, such as fruit flies and the gypsy moth. Some pests, like fruit flies and red imported fire ants, are considered so risky that special traps are set up near ports and airports for quick detection.

## Home Biosecurity Officers

Biosecurity work isn't only done by officials and scientists. Each year, New Zealanders report around ten thousand suspected pests and diseases. Community surveillance – by iwi, landowners, conservation groups, and schools – is one of the best ways to gather information. In fact, it's essential if we want to keep New Zealand as pest-free as possible.

So what can you do to help? For starters, know what to look for. Biosecurity threats, especially new ones, are always advertised. Read the newspaper, check online, watch the news. New Zealand's lucky: it has nearly five million pairs of eyes. If we all keep them open, we have a much greater chance of spotting a new pest or disease before it can establish itself. And finally, when you travel, always take care when you return home. Pay attention and read the forms and signs. Don't be that person at the airport who forgets about their mango!

### GLOSSARY

**eradication:** the wiping out of an unwanted species

**insecticide:** a poison used to kill insects

**surveillance:** closely watching something





# Donkey Sleepover

by Sarah Johnson

“You should have a sleepover,” Mum says. “For your birthday.”

“A sleepover?” I say.

Eomma, my other mum, looks up from serving the rice. “Great idea,” she says.

I’ve never been to a sleepover. Where we used to live, there was no need. There was only a handful of houses – kids swapped between them whenever they liked.

It’s different here. The girls in my class are always organising sleepovers. It takes days and involves endless discussion: who to invite, what to do, what to eat ... that sort of thing. I haven’t been invited to one yet.

“Who would I ask?” I say.

“Your friends,” says Eomma.

“From school.”

“Friends?” I say. We’ve been here

two months. There are a couple of girls I hang out with – Chloe and Amisha – but I don’t think of them as friends yet. I like them, though.

“And where would we sleep?” I add.

Our new place is tiny. Mum calls it semi-detached, which sounds flash but really just means it’s joined to the flat next door, where Mrs Gray lives. I’ve got my own room, but it’s hardly bigger than a cupboard. On the plus side, there’s a yard big enough for my tramp and beyond that, a sports field.

“We’ll clear out the lounge,” says Eomma. “You could sleep on the floor.”

“And we can have donkey rides,” adds Mum.

“Donkey rides!” I say. “What?”

“There’s a gorgeous one at the shelter at the moment.”

Mum works at the animal rescue shelter. She's always bringing home stray animals – though there's never been a donkey. "We can tie him up in the yard," she says. "He's ex-circus and used to giving rides. You could take him round the sports field."

"Mum," I say. "I'm turning ten, not six."

"Never too old for a donkey," she says.



There's no getting out of the sleepover. Apparently Eomma had them all the time when she was a girl. "We'd stay up late, listening to music and plaiting each other's hair," she says.

"I have short hair," I point out.

"You could have a midnight feast instead. With kimchi and bulgogi and mandu – all your favourites."

"The girls in my class won't have tried that food."

"Then it will be a treat," Eomma says. "Something different."

Something different. She's got that right.

On Monday, I take the invites to school. Mum prints out five, but only two have names: Chloe's and Amisha's. I put the invites on my desk. That's when Phoebe sees them. Phoebe sits near me, but we haven't talked much.



“A sleepover,” she says. “I had an amazing sleepover in the holidays. There were thirteen of us. We hired a popcorn machine. You don’t have any cats, do you?”

“Cats?” I say, confused. “No.”

“Or dogs?”

I shake my head.

“I can come then. I couldn’t come if you had pets. I’m allergic to fur.” She takes an invite. “This means Frankie and Mia will be coming, too.”

“I don’t know them,” I say.

“Doesn’t matter,” says Phoebe. “If I say I’m going, they’ll come.” She picks up two more invites and notices the two that remain. “Chloe and Amisha?” she says. “You’re inviting them?” I nod, worried this won’t be OK, but Phoebe just shrugs.

I update Mum as soon as I get home. “We can’t have a donkey. Phoebe’s coming, and she’s allergic.”

“Allergic to donkeys?” says Mum. “What a shame. It was a fun idea.”



All week, Phoebe gives advice about the sleepover. I do a lot of nodding. I don’t have much to add – but by the weekend, I’m really nervous. Ten minutes before it’s due to start,

the doorbell goes. It’s Mrs Gray from next door. She’s carrying a big cake.

“I hear you’re having a sleepover,” she says. “I just love sleepovers.” I invite her in.

Mrs Gray starts telling Eomma about a sleepover she went to in 1962. “At least one person’s turned up,” I think.

The girls arrive all at once. There’s loads of noise – everyone seems very excited. I start to feel a lot better.

“Isn’t this wonderful!” says Mrs Gray. “What games are we playing?”

Frankie puts her hand in front of her mouth. “Who’s that?” she loud whispers.

“My neighbour,” I say.

Frankie grimaces. Then Phoebe sees the cake. “What kind of cake is that?” she asks suspiciously.

Mrs Gray hears and looks pleased. She smiles proudly. “Chocolate and zucchini. I grew –”

“Ew! Zucchini’s a vegetable!” Frankie says. “Who puts vegetables in a cake?” She turns to me. “Let’s look at your room.”

So I show them my tiny bedroom. “We can’t all sleep here,” says Mia.

“No,” I say. “We’re sleeping in the lounge.”



I show them the lounge. We've pushed back the furniture to make more space.

"There were fourteen people at my sleepover," says Mia, "but I've got a huge room, so we all fitted." She points at the sleeping mats stacked against the wall. "What are those?"

"They're called yo," I say.

"You sleep on them, on the floor."

"Are they comfortable?" asks Phoebe. She looks sideways at Mia.

Then Mum arrives home from work. I'm so pleased to see her that at first, I don't pay much attention to the big brown box she's carrying. In fact, I don't twig until she's lifted the lid. By then, it's too late.

"Guinea pigs!" cries Amisha.

"I thought you girls might like to play with them," Mum says.

Amisha reaches into the box and lifts out the fattest, hairiest creature I've ever seen. "I just love guinea pigs!" she says, handing the hairy thing backwards to whoever's there. She doesn't bother to look. "Take this. I'll get the others."



The fat, hairy guinea pig lands right in Phoebe's arms. "Arrrgggh," she screams.

Within ten minutes, Phoebe's eyes have puffed up like a lizard's. Fifteen minutes, and large red welts are appearing on her arms and legs.



Mum looks concerned. She takes me to one side. "You didn't tell me she was allergic to guinea pigs."

"You didn't tell me we'd be having them," I say. "Phoebe's allergic to all fur."

"Oh, dear," Mum says. "I think I'd better take her home."

Mia and Frankie decide they need to go too. We watch them all leave.

Eomma's confused. "Why didn't Mia and Frankie stay?" she asks.

"They couldn't," says Chloe.

"They come as a group." I try hard not to laugh out loud at this.

Chloe, Amisha, and I play with the guinea pigs while Eomma makes dinner and talks to Mrs Gray. When the food's ready, she calls us inside. She's set the table all nice with the fancy glasses and the linen tablecloth and flowers. Mum gets home just in time.

"Yum," says Chloe. "Kimchi. I love kimchi."

"You like Korean food?" Eomma asks. "Really?"

"Totally," says Chloe. "My uncle's Korean. We have it when he visits."

After dinner, we cut the cake. Just as I'm giving Mrs Gray a hug

to say thank you, there's a strange noise outside. "Gosh!" says Mum. "I wonder what that can be?"

We rush to the front door. Hitched to the back of Mum's car is a trailer, and inside the trailer is a donkey.

"I thought now that Phoebe's left ...," Mum says. "No one else is allergic, are they?"

"Awesome!" says Chloe.

We ride the donkey round and round the sports field until it gets dark. He's slow but very friendly, and we have loads of fun. Then Mum ties him to the tramp, and we go inside to watch a movie.



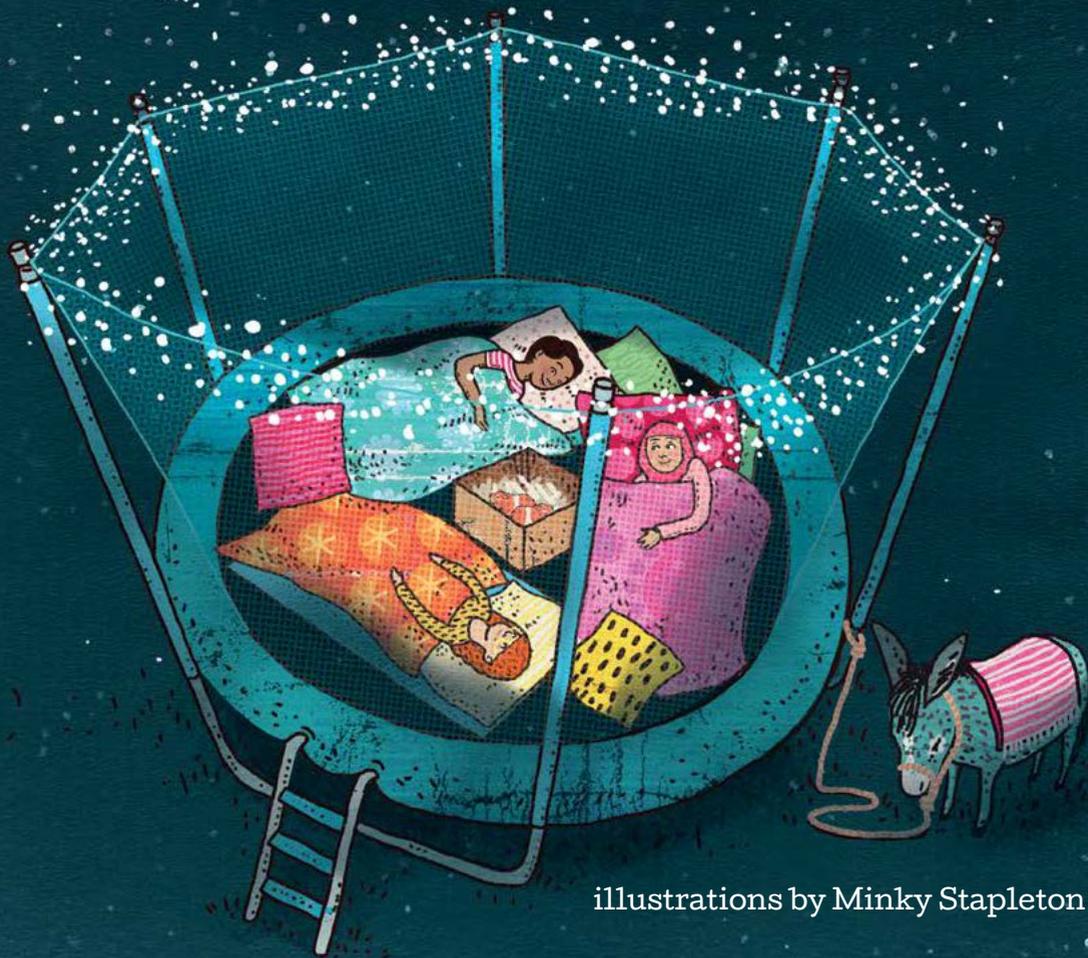
Mrs Gray is still there, and she watches, too. By the time the movie has finished, we're all yawning. Mrs Gray has fallen asleep on the couch. Her mouth's wide open and she's snoring. It's so loud, we decide to sleep on the tramp. We drag out the yo and arrange them in a circle, piling duvets on top. Mum brings out the box of guinea pigs, and Amisha zips up the net so they can't escape.

We each make a nest and lie back to look at the stars. At first, we can hear the guinea pigs rustling in their box, but after a while, they go quiet and the only sound is the occasional snort from the donkey.

Chloe yawns. "Cool sleepover," she says.

"Best one I've been to," says Amisha.

"Yeah," I say. "Me too."



illustrations by Minky Stapleton

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>READING YEAR LEVEL</b>
Broken Wing	6
Whānau	5
Donkey Sleepover	5
Speechless	6
Iris and <i>Dog Star</i>	5
Unwanted Visitors	6
Words	5

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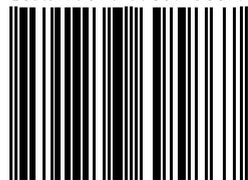
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