



SCHOOL  
JOURNAL  
MAY 2020



| TITLE                          | READING YEAR LEVEL |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Kia Māia                       | 5                  |
| Ghost Walk                     | 6                  |
| Want Relief                    | 6                  |
| The Longest Walk               | 5                  |
| Changing Lives: The Omeo Story | 6                  |
| Bad Advice                     | 5                  |
| A Mugging in Maths             | 6                  |

This Journal supports learning across the New Zealand Curriculum at level 3. It supports literacy learning by providing opportunities for students to develop the knowledge and skills they need to meet the reading demands of the curriculum at this level. Each text has been carefully levelled in relation to these demands; its reading year level is indicated above.

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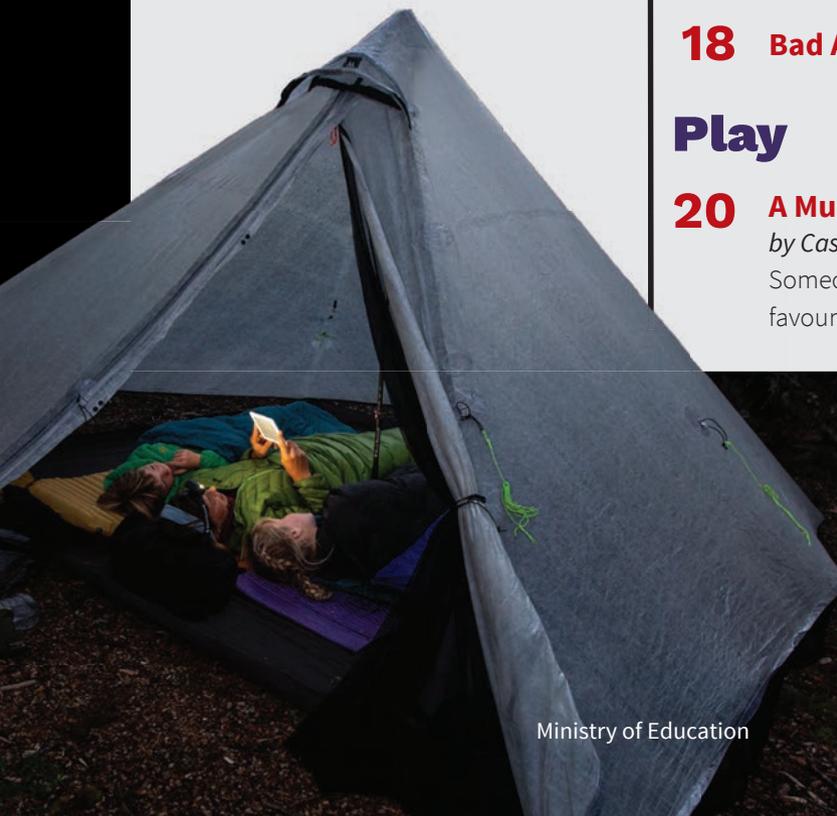
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# Kia Māia

by André Ngāpō

“Look out, Jayson!” Nikora yells. Too late. The ball smashes me in the face. “Sorry, cuz,” he says. “You’ve gotta keep your eye on the ball.”

“Yeah,” laughs Rena. “Not the ball on your eye!” A few of the others laugh, too, and I walk away. I don’t like this game.

Nikora follows me. We’re supposed to be hanging out while Nan works in the kitchen. “You OK?” he asks.

I nod.

“We told Rena she was mean.”

“Thanks,” I say. My eye is feeling better. I look around, testing it. I see the slow brown river and the big macrocarpa. The hills covered in green bush. It’s nothing like home.

“Touch is a fun game once you know how to play.”

“I guess so,” I say.

We go see Nan. “Ah, good timing,” she says. “You boys can help with the mahi in the wharekai.”

“Mahi means work,” Nikora says to me. He’s been explaining things all morning. “The wharekai is where we eat.” He shoots me a look, like maybe I don’t like him telling me stuff – or maybe he still feels bad about the ball.

Nan takes me to meet Auntie Tina, who kisses me on the cheek. There’s something familiar about her. “Pay attention to what Auntie says,” Nan tells me. “It’s good practice for tomorrow.” She’s talking about Nanny Eva’s unveiling. It’s all everyone’s talking about, though I’m not sure what an unveiling is.

Auntie Tina has lots of jobs for us. She’s really nice and explains things carefully. I realise she looks like Mum.

We put out plates and cups and cutlery for tea tonight. We fill up the salt and pepper shakers and straighten the bench seats. Out the front window, I can see people being welcomed into the wharenuī. They’re lined up, doing the hongī, just like I did yesterday. Out the back window, some people are digging a hole.

“For the hāngī,” says Nikora.

“But don’t worry, you’ll get to try it.” Dad had a hāngī the first time he came to New Zealand to meet Nan.

A few of the nannies and uncles are playing cards in a side room. They’re all laughing away. It sounds like fun. Auntie Tina sees me looking in at them. “They’ve earned a rest,” she says. “It’s our turn to do the mahi now, but you can join them later.”



Someone else is having a rest – I can hear a guitar outside. They're playing an Ed Sheeran song. I'd love to have a strum right now. I picture Mum's guitar, sitting in our lounge in Perth. Dad said she often played to me before I was born. Sang too. She recorded her favourite waiata on the iPod. I've learnt the words and chords with Dad so we can play together.

We drink iced water with the other workers. Aunty Tina brings us egg sandwiches, putting the plate on a spare table at the back of the hall. I sit down, and suddenly Nikora's yelling at me. "Jayson! No sitting on tables."

"What? Why?" I ask, not moving. I'm mad. He can't yell at me.

"Tikanga," he says. "You shouldn't sit where food goes."

Tikanga. How was I meant to know? I remember Dad saying something about it, but not much. He did say Mum wanted me to learn some karakia. She made recordings of them too, along with the songs. But there was nothing about tikanga.

"Kei te pai, Jayson," Aunty Tina says. "It's OK. You'll know for next time. I'm still learning, too."

I get off the table, embarrassed. Nikora says sorry, which makes me feel better.





That night, we have a church service in the wharenuī. Nikora and I sit beside Nan. She puts her arm around me and explains that this whole weekend is for Nanny Eva's family and friends ... to say goodbye. Nanny Eva passed away a year ago. I still wonder why everyone's calling it an unveiling and why they didn't say goodbye at the funeral, but the minister starts to speak before I can ask. I'm curious to know what he's saying. I hear the word whānau. I know that. Family. The minister says Nanny Eva's name along with some of the

words from the iPod. I'll ask Nikora what they mean later.

I think about Dad in Papua New Guinea. He's working there for two months. He says it's the longest he'll ever be away. Then my mind drifts to Mum. She would love that I'm at her marae, with her whānau, hearing te reo Māori, learning tikanga.

The minister clears his throat, and everyone starts praying with him.

It's Mum's karakia! I join in, bursting with happiness. Nikora smiles in surprise. Nan reaches out to hold my hand.

In the morning, we line up in the wharekai for breakfast: porridge, nice and runny, with sultanas and tinned peaches, just how Dad makes it. I see the girl, Rena, who made the joke about the ball hitting me. “Sorry about yesterday,” she says. “I didn’t mean for everyone to laugh at you. Your face all good now?”

I nod. “All good.”

“Come and sit with us,” she says, leading me over to Nikora and some of the other kids. They ask about Australia and copy my accent. I say they’re the ones with the accent, and they laugh.

We clear the tables and help with the dishes, and soon it’s time to set up the wharekai for the feast. We do the same jobs as yesterday. “Hey, Aunty Tina,” I say, finally working up the courage to ask my question. “What’s an unveiling?”

“Well,” she says, “today everyone will get to see Nanny Eva’s new headstone at the urupā, the cemetery. The stone sits at the top of her grave. It’ll have words about her, and it might have her picture too.”

“OK,” I say.

“It’s called an unveiling because the headstone is covered with a korowai, but the cloak will be taken away.”

Nikora joins in. “There’ll be lots of karakia and waiata. After people leave the urupā, and sprinkle water over themselves to remove the tapu, they’ll come back here for a kai. It’s how we finish a hura kōhatu, all together with food.”

“Ka pai, Nikora,” says Aunty Tina. “You’re an excellent tuakana, though I’m sure your cousin here has a thing or two he could teach you ...” We all smile. Maybe.

Nan comes into the wharekai and walks around, inspecting our mahi. “Great job,” she says. “Time for a break?” Right then I hear the guitar again. I don’t know who’s out there, but they’re really good.

Aunty Tina notices me listening. “You play, Jayson?” she says. I nod.

I’ve been learning since I was seven, though I’m nowhere near as good as the person outside. “I have a guitar at home,” she says. “It needs some new strings, but you can borrow it.”

“Can you play rock?” Nikora asks.

“My favourite,” I say. “I can teach you some chords. I’ll be the ... what is it ... the tuakana? And you can be the other one.”

Nikora laughs. “The teina.”

.....

The last of the manuhiri have gone. It's just us left. The light's beginning to fade, but we don't care – we're playing touch. My team's behind by one try.

Now the ball's coming my way. "Kia māia, Jayson," I hear a voice call. It's Nan. I hold my breath and make

the catch and quickly pass the ball off to Nikora, who's running straight down the middle of the field.

"Nice pass, Jayson," he calls as he blasts off.

"Yeah, nice one," says Rena. She comes over to give me a high-five. I feel so happy.



illustrations by Minky Stapleton



# The Longest

**It's still dark when Elizabeth wakes up.** She hears the sounds of people sleeping: long breaths and sighs. Her mum, Jorinde, is pulling on a jumper. Chris, her dad, is stuffing gear into his pack. It's almost time to start walking. Careful to be quiet, Elizabeth finds her pack and carries it outside into the frozen air.

In front of the hut, there's a huge field of golden **tussock**. Mountains surround the field, and the sky is pale pink. Elizabeth runs down to the river to fill her water bottle. Her parents and brother join her. Johnny is six, and he's so sleepy his eyes are half-closed. Their plan is to walk, before breakfast, to the top of Poukirikiri/ Travers Saddle, high above the Nelson Lakes.



# Walk

by Rebekah White



## Stretching forever

The Rapsey family has been walking for exactly three months and one day. They're following a route called Te Araroa, which means "the long pathway". It's the longest track in the country, starting at Cape Rēinga at the top of Te Ika-a-Māui and finishing at Bluff, right at the bottom of Te Waipounamu.

Today the family is beginning one of the track's most difficult sections. They will cross two mountain passes in Nelson Lakes National Park. They're in a hurry because the forecast says rain, and they want to be over the first pass before it arrives.

When her parents first asked Elizabeth if she'd like to walk Te Araroa, she thought it would be fun. She'd done lots of tramping before. But it didn't start out as fun. On their second day, they walked 27 kilometres along Te Oneroa-a-Tōhē. The sand stretched forever in each direction. Elizabeth assumed they'd rest the next day. Instead they walked even further – another 30 kilometres.

CAPE RĒINGA

BLUFF



## Tiny towns and red rocks

Te Araroa became easier after those first days – and more interesting. In Northland, the Rapseys walked through lots of tiny towns and rolling hills. Then they reached Tāmakimakaurau, with its tall buildings and suburban streets. After that came the farmland of Waikato and the ancient trees of Pureora, where Elizabeth and Johnny listened for the kōkako. They passed Mount Ngāuruhoe and Mount Tongariro, emerald-coloured lakes and red rocks. When they reached the Whanganui River, the track became water, so they hired a canoe and began to paddle.

Elizabeth makes sure the family walks every step of the way. One time, they got a ride along a busy section of the highway because someone said that would be safer. When they got out of the car, Elizabeth burst into tears. She'd wanted to walk the whole way. Then she and Johnny would set the record for being the youngest people to finish Te Araroa. So the next morning, they went back and walked the section they'd skipped.

Most nights, they camp in their tent. Sometimes they stay in tramping huts or houses. At the end of each day, Elizabeth and Johnny play: in a pine forest, or next to a creek, or in a hut. They wear the same clothes, and they wash in rivers or the sea. Occasionally they shower in a campground.



## Night ninety?

Today, the track zigzags up to the saddle. The Rapseys climb until they reach a field of giant boulders. Some of them are split in half like apples, and Elizabeth scrambles into a gap. Up close, the boulder is covered in fine lines like a spiderweb turned to stone. There's a mountain shaped like a pyramid. Elizabeth checks the map: it's called Mount Travers.

From the saddle to the Sabine Valley is a long way down, but the forest shades the family from the sun. When the wind blows, tiny beech leaves glitter in the air all around. While they walk, Johnny tells the story of their trip. He likes to remember, in order, all the places they've stayed: the place where they played in the high grass, the campground, the caravan, the forest where there was no water and they had to scrape the mud from their legs before going to sleep. They're trying to decide which number night this one will be. Ninety or ninety-one?





## Two lakes

The next morning, the sky is a clear, bright blue. They're camping beside Rotomairewhenua/the Blue Lake, which has some of the clearest freshwater in the world. The lake is 7 metres deep, but even if it were 70 metres, you'd still be able to see the bottom. Elizabeth watches a stone sink. The water looks like air with a colour.

It's time to tackle the second pass. They clamber up a steep wall of jumbled rocks. Small, bushy plants grow in the cracks. They have shiny leaves and twisted branches. Elizabeth notices the **flora** changing as she climbs. Higher up, plants are small; they look as if they're crouching against the wind.

Above the **moraine** there's a bigger lake. It's called Rotopōhueroa/ Lake Constance, and it shines like a sheet of metal. The track turns sharply and leads straight up. They disappear into the cloud.



Inside the cloud, it's very quiet. All sound is dulled except for Johnny's whistling. Elizabeth can hear him up ahead. He only stops when he's making calculations in his head. How many litres of milk can you make from a bag of milk powder? What's a hundred divided by six? Elizabeth concentrates on climbing the **scree** slope. The loose stones make it slow going. Sometimes, she slides part-way down after a step. Her boots dislodge stones that tumble down, down, down.

Johnny pauses for a moment and turns around. "It's a bit steep," he says. "Yep," says Dad.

Elizabeth gets on with it. Her legs don't ache any more. They used to, at the start, but now they've learnt to keep going all day. She dashes up the last bit of scree, and then she's there at the top. The clouds have cleared. On one side, she can see the two lakes. There's new country on the other. Elizabeth spots a stream. It might have some swimming holes. Just below her is a patch of clean white snow. She sprints down to it. Johnny's right behind.







## Deep south

Walking in the South Island has been very different from the North. The open land is golden brown instead of green, and the forest is tall beech. There are fewer towns and people. In Southland, the family decides to break their record and walk 40 kilometres in one day.

The days and weeks pass until Elizabeth wakes in Invercargill with 25 kilometres to go. Then they'll have reached the bottom of New Zealand. It's been five months minus a day since they set off from Cape Rēinga. Last night was number 152.

They leave the city behind and cross an estuary and a train line, and then the track joins the highway. Walking beside a highway is the opposite of walking in the mountains. Elizabeth holds her mum's hand or her dad's, and they stay inside the white line that marks the edge of the road.





When a car is coming, they step down into the ditch to get as far away as possible. They brace themselves against the roar and slam of the wind as the car passes. Beside the highway, in the grass, there are hub-caps, squashed cans, empty cigarette packets, banana skins. There isn't anywhere to rest, to go for a swim, or to play games. In the hazy distance, they can see Bluff. The small town looks like it's floating.

## Bluff

In the late afternoon, they reach a footpath. It's flat and smooth, luxury under Elizabeth's feet. Johnny flops down in the grass. He's tired. Across the road, containers are stacked like Lego at Bluff's port. There are only 3.2 kilometres left to walk in the whole of New Zealand, but Johnny won't get up. This drives Elizabeth crazy.

"If you come now, I'll let you get there first," she promises him.

He isn't paying attention. "I like the word Bluff," he says.

"Because it means we're almost there?" Dad asks.

The small houses in Bluff look over the ocean, towards Rakiura/Stewart Island and Antarctica. The day is fading. Elizabeth can sense the end and breaks into a run. Johnny dashes after her.

The road dips, and there's the Bluff signpost, pointing in every direction. Elizabeth reaches it first and swings around it. For a few moments, she's the youngest person to have walked the length of the country. Then Johnny catches up. Now he's the youngest.

"How many kilometres?" Mum asks, dropping her pack to the ground one last time. "Twenty something?"

Elizabeth scoffs. "Three thousand," she says.



## Glossary

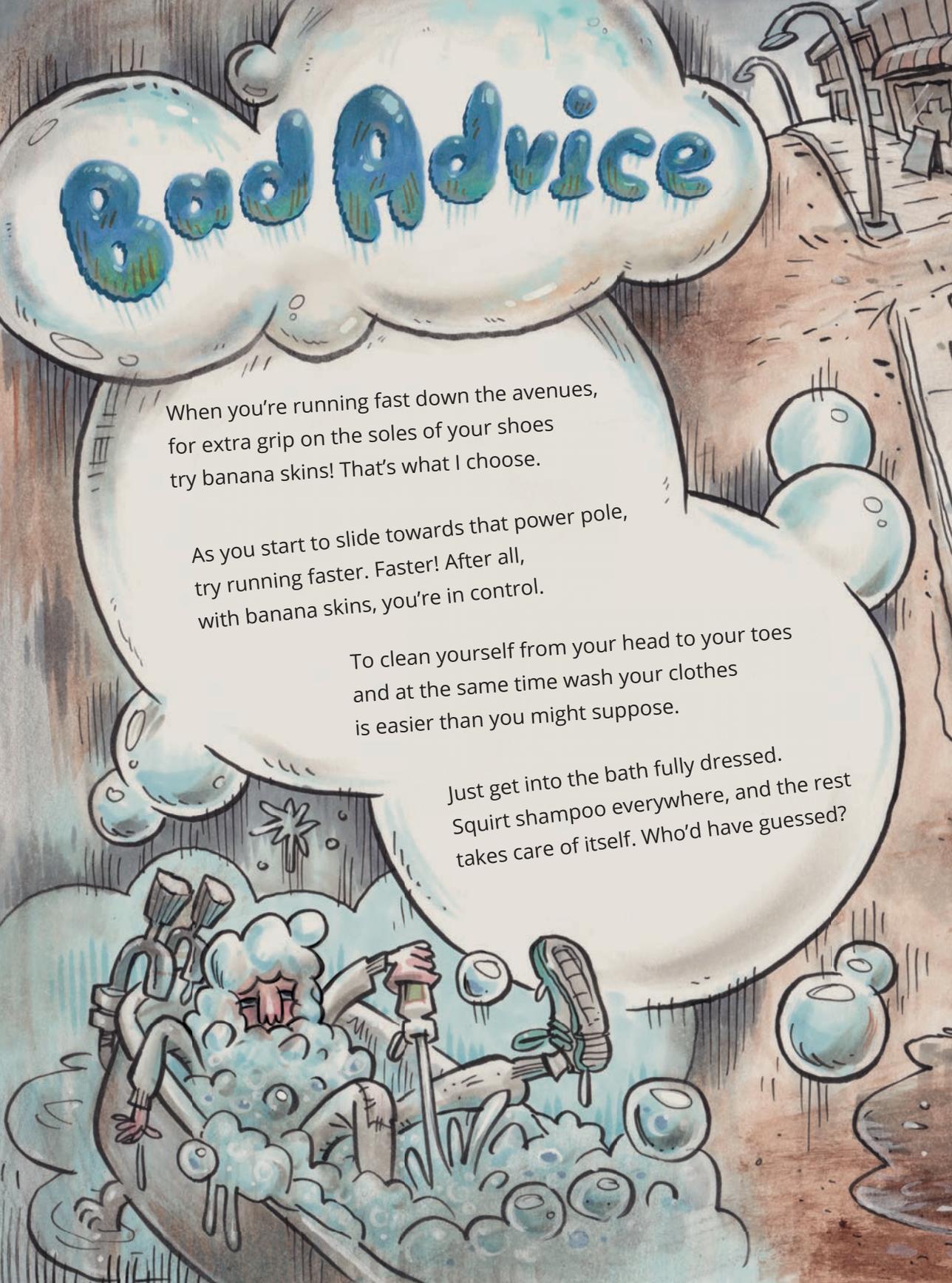
**flora:** the plants in a particular place

**moraine:** the rocks and other debris that a glacier leaves behind

**scree:** a lot of small, loose stones on the side of a mountain

**tussock:** a kind of grass that often grows in alpine places

# Bad Advice

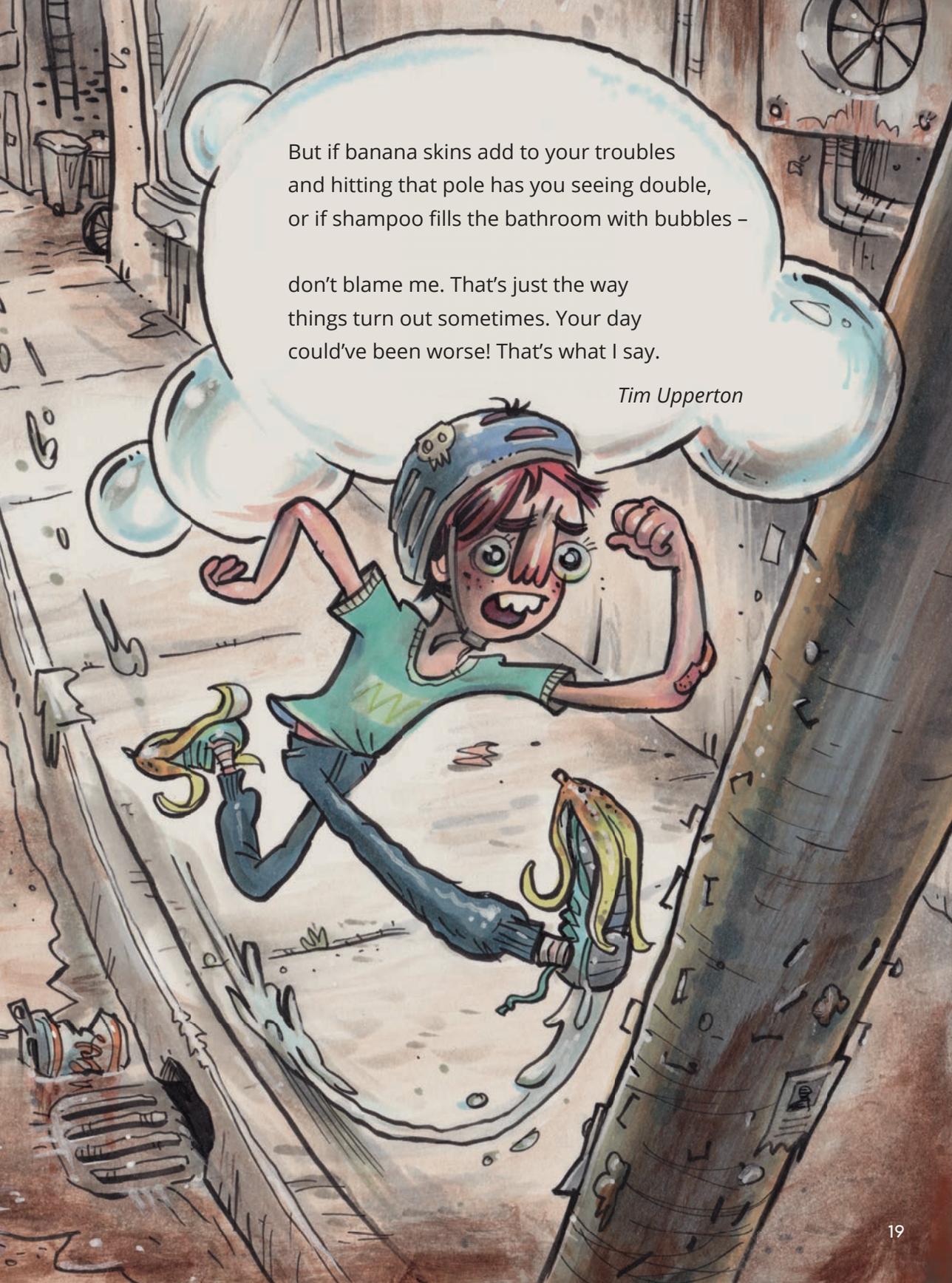


When you're running fast down the avenues,  
for extra grip on the soles of your shoes  
try banana skins! That's what I choose.

As you start to slide towards that power pole,  
try running faster. Faster! After all,  
with banana skins, you're in control.

To clean yourself from your head to your toes  
and at the same time wash your clothes  
is easier than you might suppose.

Just get into the bath fully dressed.  
Squirt shampoo everywhere, and the rest  
takes care of itself. Who'd have guessed?

A cartoon illustration of a boy with a skull helmet running through a hallway. He is wearing a green t-shirt and blue pants. He has a determined and slightly frantic expression. He is running on a floor that is covered with banana peels. A large thought bubble above him contains text. The background shows a hallway with a trash can, a ladder, and a fire extinguisher.

But if banana skins add to your troubles  
and hitting that pole has you seeing double,  
or if shampoo fills the bathroom with bubbles –

don't blame me. That's just the way  
things turn out sometimes. Your day  
could've been worse! That's what I say.

*Tim Upperton*

# A MUGGING IN MATHS

BY CASSANDRA TSE



**Scene:** A school. Lunchtime. **RUBY** is sitting on a bench, reading a detective novel.

**RUBY** (to the audience). It all started when Ms B came to see me.

**RUBY** takes out a sandwich and is about to take a bite when **MS B** enters.

**MS B.** Ruby, I'm glad I caught you. I was wondering if you could help me with something.

**RUBY** (to the audience). Ms B's actual name is Ms Benítez, but everyone calls her Ms B. She's my favourite teacher. (She turns to **MS B**.) What's wrong, Ms B?

**MS B.** Well ... I've got a bit of a mystery on my hands. And since you love detective novels, I thought you might be able to solve it for me. Sound good?

**RUBY.** Sounds great! What happened? Stolen jewels? Blackmail? Kidnapping?

**MS B.** Worse. Someone's smashed my favourite mug!

**RUBY** (to the audience). Ms B has kept her pens in that mug for years. It says "maths teachers rule" and has a picture of a ruler. It's a pun. I love puns.

**MS B.** It was perfectly fine when I went to lunch.

**RUBY.** Who would smash your favourite mug?

**MS B.** Well, that's what I was hoping you could find out. Here's the evidence. (She hands **RUBY** the broken mug and three pens.)

**RUBY.** Hmm. One broken mug and three pens: blue, red, and green. I'm on the case, Ms B! Send me the teacher who's on lunch duty.

**MS B** exits. **MR MASTERS** enters.

**RUBY** (to the audience). Mr Masters is what I'd call organised. He uses his label maker to put labels on **everything**: the cupboards, the drawers, the desks, even the coat hooks. He always wears the same outfit: a purple tie, shiny shoes, and a shirt with three purple pens in the pocket. (She turns to **MR MASTERS**.) Mr Masters, did you see anyone near room 12?

**MR MASTERS.** Hmm. Let's see. I saw a few students. Luke was bouncing a tennis ball down the corridor, and I gave him a talking to. Then Finn ran past and bumped into me. I almost spilled my coffee! Oh, and Sruthi was playing with an air horn – goodness knows where she got it from. It was making an awful racket, so I confiscated it.

**RUBY.** Thanks, Mr Masters.

**MR MASTERS** exits.

**RUBY** (to the audience). I've got a list of suspects: Luke, Finn, and Sruthi.

**LUKE** enters.

**LUKE**. Someone said you were looking for me?

**RUBY** (to the audience). Luke's always getting in trouble. One time, he jumped onto Mrs Simpson's desk and it collapsed. Another time, he threw a cheese sandwich into the central heating system. The whole school smelt like a toasted cheese sandwich for days.



**LUKE**. Umm ... who are you talking to?

**RUBY** (to **LUKE**). No one! I'm narrating.

**LUKE**. You're what?

**RUBY**. I'll ask the questions, thank you! (She starts speaking like an interrogator.)

Where were you on the afternoon of Tuesday the third?

**LUKE**. You mean today?

**RUBY**. Yeah.

**LUKE**. Uh, I ate a sandwich, then played wall ball with my friends.

**RUBY**. Mr Masters saw you bouncing a tennis ball down the corridor outside room 12.

**LUKE.** Well, yeah, we got bored, and I wanted to see if the walls inside were more fun to bounce off. Mr Masters took my ball and said I could get it back after school. So unfair!

**RUBY.** Ms B's favourite mug has been smashed. You're sure you didn't accidentally knock it off her desk?

**LUKE.** Yes, I'm sure! Man, whenever something goes wrong around here, everyone thinks I did it.

**RUBY.** To be fair, a lot of the time you did do it.

**LUKE.** Mrs Simpson's desk wasn't my fault! The floor was lava!

**RUBY.** Did you see anyone else around room 12?

**LUKE.** Yeah, Finn was in there. He came zooming out with a piece of paper and a guilty look on his face. He smashed right into Mr Masters. It was funny as.

**RUBY.** A guilty look? Hmm. Thanks for your help, Luke.

**LUKE** *exits.*

**RUBY** *(to the audience).* Well, unless Luke's lying, he didn't smash the mug. On to the next suspect.

**FINN** *enters.*

**RUBY** *(to the audience).* Every morning, we do a quick-fire maths test. Finn always gets ten out of ten. He does the extra-for-experts homework, and he's in the library club, coding club, chess club, and choir. I think he has a little crush on Ms B.

**FINN.** I do not!

**RUBY.** Well, he would say that, wouldn't he? *(She turns to FINN.)* What were you doing in room 12 earlier?

**FINN.** Nothing. I haven't gone near room 12 today.

**RUBY.** That's interesting. Because Luke just said he saw you running out of there in a hurry.

**FINN** *(nervously).* Oh, **that** room 12. Uh, I was getting my drink bottle. Why are you asking?

**RUBY.** Ms B's mug was smashed.

**FINN.** Oh, no! The maths teachers rule mug?

**RUBY.** Yep.



**FINN.** Aw, that's my favourite! I love puns.

**RUBY** (enthusiastically). Me too. (Back in detective mode.)

Anyway, you're telling me you didn't see anything suspicious?

**FINN.** Um ...

**RUBY.** If you went into class to get your drink bottle, why did Luke say you were holding a sheet of paper?

**FINN.** Oh, all right! I mucked up the quick-fire maths test this morning. I forgot to move the decimal point for question eight. It was such a tiny mistake I thought why not just take the test and fix it up before it was marked?

**RUBY.** You were **cheating**?

**FINN.** No! Well, maybe a little bit. I didn't want to lose my record. I've had ten out of ten all year! (He takes a piece of paper from his pocket and shows **RUBY**.) But it didn't matter anyway. Ms B's already marked the tests. There it is. A big purple X.

**RUBY.** That explains the guilty look ...

**FINN.** But I didn't touch the mug! It was perfectly fine when I last saw it.

**FINN** exits.

**RUBY** (to the audience). Finn isn't the goody-good he's always seemed – but he didn't break the mug, either.

**SRUTHI** enters.

**SRUTHI**. Ruby, is this going to take long? I have plans for my lunch break.

**RUBY** (to the audience). Sruthi is always doing pranks. Last term, she put cling film over the door to the classroom. The term before, she snuck into the staff kitchen and put salt in the sugar jar. Mr Masters put a whole spoonful of salt in his coffee! (She turns to **SRUTHI**.) Ms B's mug has been smashed. Know anything about it?

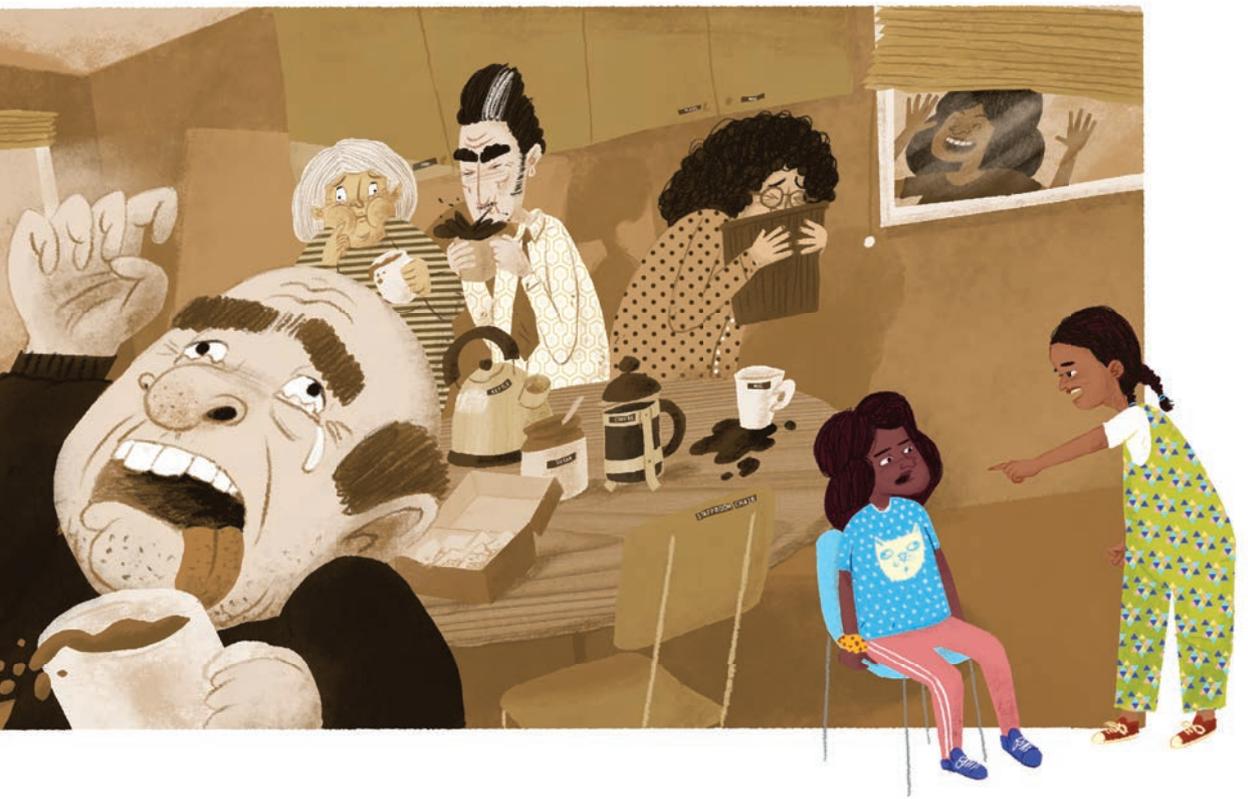
**SRUTHI**. Nope.

**RUBY**. You sure? I know you were outside the room earlier. Did you think breaking Ms B's mug would be some kind of a prank?

**SRUTHI**. No way! My pranks are way more awesome than that. Remember the thing with the Batman mask? And the spaghetti?

**RUBY**. That one was pretty funny.

**SRUTHI**. It was **gold!**



**RUBY.** So what's the prank you're planning for today?

**SRUTHI.** It's a surprise, but it's not gonna work unless Mr Masters gives me back my air horn. I was testing it, and he came right out of room 12 and snatched it off me!

**RUBY.** Wait. Mr Masters was **in** room 12?

**SRUTHI.** Yeah.

**RUBY.** But that means ... aha! It all makes sense.

**SRUTHI.** It does?

**RUBY.** I've solved the mystery!

**EVERYONE** enters.

**RUBY.** The person who broke the mug was Mr Masters! He just wanted to get his purple pen, which Ms B had borrowed. But as he was taking it out of the mug, Sruthi blew the air horn, and Mr Masters was startled and knocked the whole thing onto the floor.

**FINN.** How'd you work that out?

**RUBY.** Easy. Your test is marked in purple pen, but there were no purple pens at the scene of the crime. Mr Masters has all three in his pocket, like always.

**MS B** (turning to **MR MASTERS**). Is this true?

**MR MASTERS.** She's right. I'm so sorry! I didn't realise that was why Ruby was asking about kids in the corridor or I would have explained myself straight away. Can I buy you a replacement?

**MS B.** As long as it has a maths pun on it.

**MR MASTERS.** Of course. I love puns.

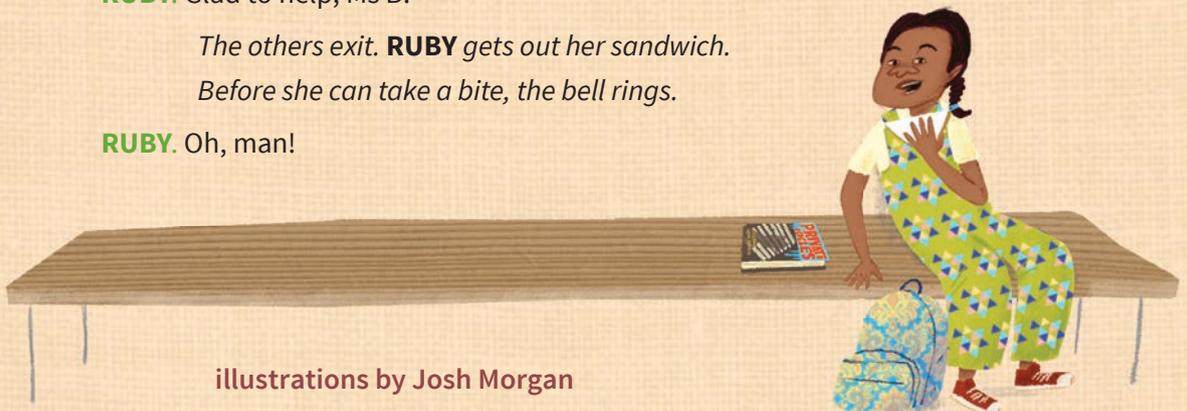
**MS B.** Thank you, Ruby. You could give Sherlock Holmes a run for his money!

**RUBY.** Glad to help, Ms B!

*The others exit. RUBY gets out her sandwich.*

*Before she can take a bite, the bell rings.*

**RUBY.** Oh, man!



illustrations by Josh Morgan

# GHOST WALK

by Renata Hopkins



I just about had all the ghosts. There were only two left, plus the zombie. I slid to the right, ready to bolt if I spied his spooky green glow. Instead, a hand reached over my shoulder ... and everything went black.

“Grandpa! Did you see my score? At least *tell* me when screen time’s over.”

“I did tell you. Three times.” Grumpa had on his grumpy face. “It’s not my fault you’ve got selective hearing.”

I followed him into the kitchen. “One more game. Please? I’m developing my hand-eye co-ordination. And my powers of observation.”

“Not to mention your square eyes and numb bum.” Grumpa waved a knife at some half-made sandwiches on the bench. “We’re going on a walk. Ham and egg or just egg?”

I groaned. “I don’t want to go on a walk.”

He did the face again, even grumpier.

“Just egg,” I said.

Fifteen minutes later, we were tramping down Fitzgerald Ave. Grumpa had packed sunblock, water, the sandwiches, and light refreshments ... whatever that was. All that food was a bad sign, but I asked anyway. "Is it a long walk?"

"About six kilometres, give or take."

Grumpa has dragged me on plenty of long walks. I knew how to crunch the numbers. On average, a human being covers around a kilometre in ten minutes. "So, that's an hour?" I said.

Grumpa nodded. "Each way."

"What!"

"It's six k's there, six back. Plus lunch. Call it two and a half hours, round trip."

I stopped walking. "I'm not coming."

Grumpa kept going.

I stood still, feeling the hot asphalt through my sneakers. Cars cruised by, lucky people on wheels. I wondered how long it would take Grumpa to come back, but after two minutes, I gave up.

I caught up with him on River Road. He was waiting beside a barrier with a sign: "Pedestrians and Cyclists Only".

"Welcome to the invisible Red Zone tour," Grumpa announced. "Your friendly local guide – me – will point out historic landmarks as we go. Keep your eyes peeled. Any questions?"

I put my hand up.

"Yes, green T-shirt in the front."

"How are we supposed to see historic landmarks if they're invisible?" I said.

"Excellent question. Fortunately, your guide has oldie-vision, which allows him to see things that aren't there. Anyway, weren't you developing your powers of observation this morning?" He waggled his bushy eyebrows. I couldn't help smiling. "Anything else?"

"Yes. When's lunch?"

"Sandwiches will be served at the munted Medway footbridge, but we'll stop for light refreshments on the way. At the home without a house."

"Where?"

Grumpa was already walking. "You'll see," he called over his shoulder. "Then again, maybe you won't."



When I'd heard adults talk about the Red Zone – the land where they couldn't rebuild after the earthquakes – it had always sounded like something from an alien movie. But apart from the roadworks on the other side of the river, everything was quiet and green. It looked like an empty park – or a golf course with no one playing. Still, there was something weird about the place. I just couldn't figure out what. Maybe it was the way the weeds grew through the road like they were eating it.

We walked for fifteen minutes, then crossed the river onto Avonside Drive. Two massive black swans glided downstream, the king and queen of the river. Apart from them, there was nothing much to see. I was just about to bring up the light refreshments when Grumpa stopped.

"Welcome to the home without a house," he said, pointing to a square of grass. "Isn't she a beauty?" Then he climbed the fence.

"I don't think you're meant to do that."

"Try and stop me," said Grumpa.

He took four big strides before turning to face me. "I am now standing in my first bedroom – well, mine and your great-uncle Ken's. I was on the top bunk, he was on the bottom due to his habit of rolling out of bed. Years later, it was your mother's room."

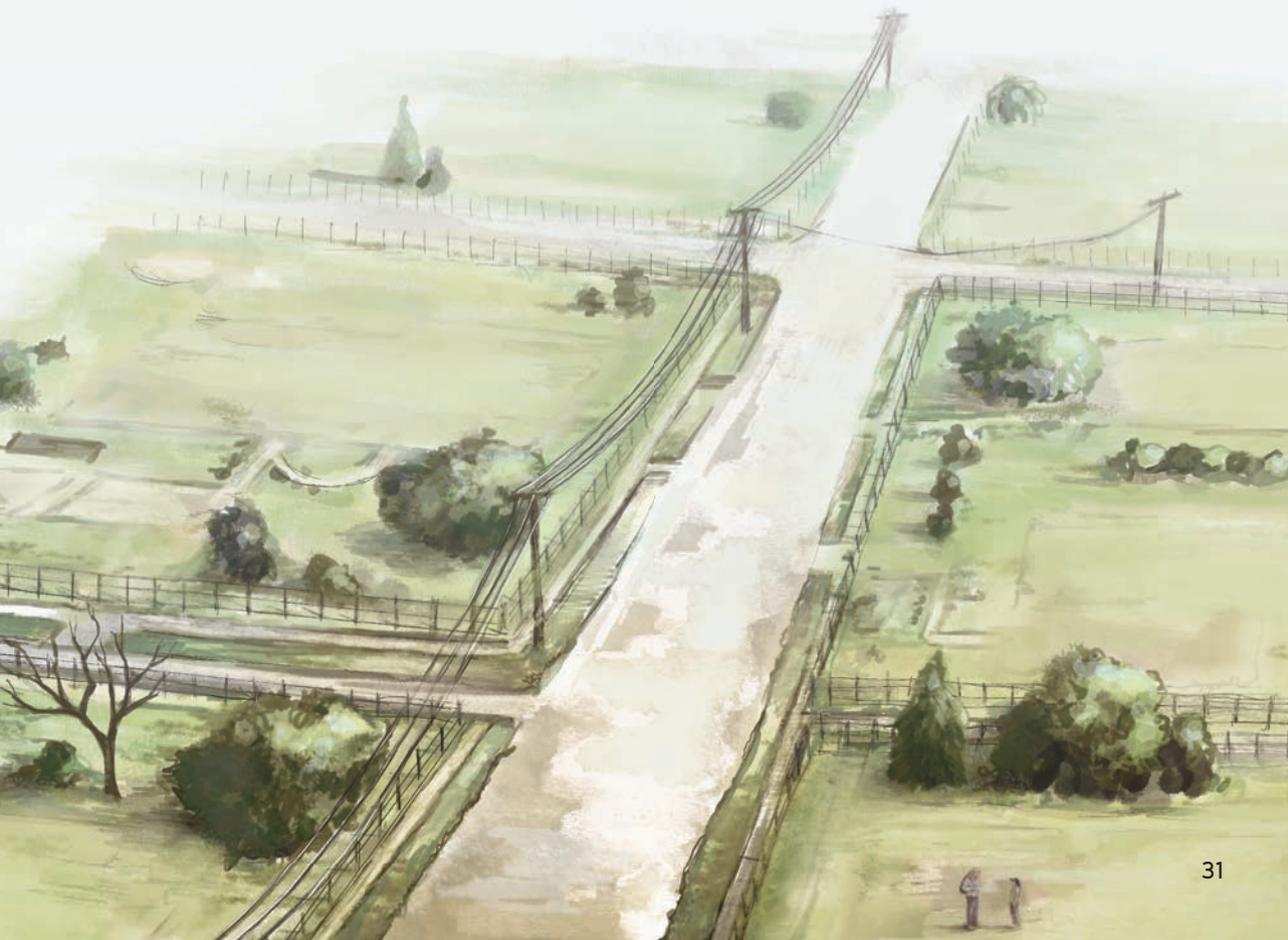


Grumpa took four big steps to the right. “Now I’m in the kitchen,” he said. “This doorframe here ...” He rested his hand on an invisible wall. “All our heights were written on it – years of them. We even had yours. I think you were about two. You were the last one.”

I’d only been joking about developing my powers of observation on the ghost game. But as Grumpa described the house that wasn’t there, that’s exactly what happened. My eyes got *sharper*. It was as if they were the lenses in a pair of binoculars that had just come into focus.

I suddenly saw that the empty patches of grass were spaces left by houses. The random trees and bushes weren’t random at all – they marked the edges of people’s sections. And the surface of the footpath kept changing because we’d been crossing old driveways. I’d spent half the morning looking for ghosts, and now they were all over the place. Ghost houses, ghost gardens, ghost fences and letterboxes and washing lines ...

“Come in. I’ll show you around,” Grumpa called.



I climbed the fence, and he led me through the invisible rooms, pointing out things he remembered as if they were right in front of him.

"This was the lounge. It got lovely sun." He laughed. "It still does, I suppose. We had a built-in bookshelf over there. Once you'd learnt to walk, you were always trying to climb it like a ladder."

"I can't remember," I said.

"No. Too young. But you spent a lot of time here ..."

"Do you believe in ghosts?" As soon as the question was out, I worried. Would it make him mad – or, even worse, sad? But he just looked thoughtful.

"Not the sort in the white sheets that go 'Woo-oo-oo'," he said. "But yes, I suppose I do."

"Have you ever seen one? Like, with your oldie-vision?"

"I can see them right now. I guess that makes this a haunted house, eh? Boo!" He shot his hands out to grab me, and I jumped. He laughed like anything.

The light refreshments turned out to be ginger loaf and a packet of nuts and raisins. We ate under the biggest tree, planted by Grumpa's mum. It was even older than him. "It's called a Cox's Orange Pippin. Grows a good apple – sort of sweet and sour at the same time."

"No wonder you like them!"

"Watch it, cheeky." Grumpa waggled his eyebrows again. "We'll have to come back in a few weeks to pick some." He patted the trunk as if it was a pet.





After we'd eaten, Grumpa started weeding the bushes. I went down to the river. At the edge, a black swan was weaving reeds and twigs into a big clump. It was making a nest. I thought Grumpa would like to see it, so I ran back.

There was no one there. He was gone, just like the house.

"Grandpa?" I called. I felt cold. "Where are you?"

He stepped out from behind a bush. The leaves had completely hidden him.

"What's the trouble?"

"I thought you were gone," I said.

Grumpa came over and hugged me. "Don't fret. I'm here." He rested his big hand on my shoulder. "I'll always be here one way or another."

I led him down to the river. When he saw the swan's nest, he smiled.

"Nice to see someone setting up house here." We watched for a while.

Then I took Grumpa's hand, and we started walking.



# CHANGING LIVES

## THE OMEO STORY

by Lucy Corry

Kevin Halsall is an ideas man. Nothing makes him happier than solving a problem. After watching his friend Marcus Thompson, a paraplegic, struggle to get around in his wheelchair, Kevin started thinking about ways he could help.



## TINKERING

Kevin is an engineer. His first flash of inspiration came after he used a Segway – a kind of self-balancing electric scooter with big wheels. “I’ve always been drawn to out-of-the-box solutions,” he says. “After I had my first ride on a Segway, I realised it was the perfect thing to start tinkering with.”

Kevin soon began to imagine a wheelchair that would free up the user’s hands. He mentioned the idea to Marcus, who borrowed a Segway so he could experiment himself. Marcus began by attaching a kind of seat. Kevin came round to take a look. “We decided that we were probably on to something,” he says.

Kevin’s first thought was to design a part that could be bolted onto a Segway, but then he realised they’d get a better result if they opened up the base; then they could adapt the electronics. It was time to make a decision. Should they design a kitset so that people could customise a Segway themselves? Or should they build a whole new mobility device?

“There were pros and cons on both sides,” Kevin says, “but deciding to work from scratch and build something of our own was a big turning point.”

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I’ve always been drawn to out-of-the-box solutions.

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## GOING VIRAL

Over the next four years, Kevin's Ōtaki workshop was littered with discarded parts from countless rejected ideas. He continued to tinker, and Marcus continued to be the test pilot. Finally, they had a prototype they were happy with. Kevin called it the Omeo. Then he entered it in a design competition, hoping to find investors to fund the next stage of development. "We made a short video," Kevin remembers. "It was just me sitting in the chair, babbling on, then a few shots of Marcus in the chair, throwing some basketball hoops."

The video was never meant to go on the internet, but somehow, it was picked up by a TV network in Australia. "They posted about us on social media," Kevin says. "My daughter said, 'Dad, you've gone viral!'" Kevin didn't know what that meant, but he soon found out. The video received 20 million hits. Thousands of people emailed him. They all wanted one of his mobility devices.





## LIFE CHANGING

Traditional wheelchairs are manual; people “power” them with their arms. Most electric wheelchairs have a kind of joystick. But the Omeo has what’s called active seat control, which makes it completely hands-free. Users operate the chair by leaning forwards, backwards, or side to side. “It’s as though your body becomes the joystick,” Kevin says. “People don’t feel like they’re driving something – the chair feels part of them.”

Marcus says his Omeo is life changing. “I can now do things others take for granted, like mow my lawns. It might sound mundane, but the first time behind a mower after my accident was such a buzz.” The chair has given Marcus all kinds of freedom. “In the past, when I talked with people who were standing, I experienced a real disconnect. They had to crouch down. They talked over me. Sometimes, they even talked about me, like I wasn’t there!” Marcus says this doesn’t happen in an Omeo. “You can be part of a group and move in and out of that group in a natural way. You can express your body language. You become part of the flow.”

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People don’t feel like they’re driving something – the chair feels part of them.

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## WIDE OPEN

The Omeo has two electric motors, powered by batteries. It has a top speed of 20 kilometres an hour and a range of around 40 kilometres. Kevin says his chair fills the gap between traditional wheelchairs and cars. "You can travel a long way in an Omeo to all kinds of places. They make getting around much easier. If you go out, you don't have to transfer from a wheelchair to a car and back to the wheelchair. You just get in the Omeo and go."

One of the most liberating things about an Omeo is that it can go pretty much anywhere, including the beach. Users can switch their wheels to an off-road set. Kevin reckons only a tiny proportion of people in wheelchairs ever get onto a beach because it's just too hard. In fact, he says a lot of places are tricky. "You don't have to be on much of an angle to tip over." But in an Omeo, the seat stays level and balanced no matter what. "You don't have that risk of falling forwards or backwards, even on a steep slope," Kevin says. "We've taken people to the beach in an Omeo, and the look on their faces when they realise the possibilities. The gates swing wide open."

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You just get in the  
Omeo and **go**.

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## AN OMEO UP CLOSE

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## ADVICE

It took the Omeo team a long time to turn their ideas into reality. Kevin has some advice about this. “You need to be a bit pigheaded. Don’t take no for an answer.” He also says you need to be totally immersed in a project. “You’ll face lots of problems. People will say your idea won’t work. So you have to really believe in what you’re doing.” It doesn’t stop there. “Even if what you’ve made is a world first, that’s only part of the journey. A whole lot comes next, like figuring out how to make your product on a large scale and how to reach customers.”

Marcus admires his friend’s focus. “Once Kevin has an idea, he likes to keep going until he gets it right,” he says. “As a designer and an engineer, he has wonderful ideas. But more importantly, Kevin’s a really good listener.”

## HOT DEMAND

The Omeo is now a sleek, eye-catching machine in hot demand, and the company is expanding fast. Yet Kevin and Marcus say they’ve only scratched the surface of what’s possible. “We want to find ways we can help people with higher-level injuries,” Kevin says. There’s also the possibility of building a static version of the Omeo to use with a virtual-reality headset. “There’s lots of interest in the benefits of creating motion in this way, especially as a form of therapy,” Kevin says. “We’re always going to be developing. There’s so much more we can do.”

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## THE MAGIC OF MOVEMENT

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Marcus Thompson loves surfing, waka ama, archery, and basketball. He broke his back in a skiing accident sixteen years ago. While this hasn't stopped him from enjoying his favourite sports, being limited to a traditional wheelchair definitely made taking part more challenging. But Marcus persevered. He believes movement makes people happy.

“So much joy comes from being able to run or dance or feel the ground beneath you,” he says. “When you're in a wheelchair ... it's really important to be able to move for the sake of moving, not just to get from A to B. For me, the Omeo taps into the subconscious need for movement that we all have.”

While the Omeo's sleek design makes it eye-catching (“it goes with all my outfits,” Marcus jokes), it also becomes invisible compared with regular wheelchairs. “You move with such efficiency and grace,” Marcus says, “and that gives you confidence. People will come up and ask me about my Omeo, and it's great that it starts a conversation, but after a while, the chair disappears and they just see you.”



# Want Relief

by Paul Mason

“Nellie?” Mother’s voice woke her.

Nell opened her eyes. She couldn’t pretend any longer. She was still trapped here, in this hovel, waking to the awful truth. They were still castaways, marooned on this freezing island. Nell glanced at Mother. She was propped up on an elbow, rubbing tired eyes. Father snored gently by her side. Under his sealskin, Mr Hawkins slept, too.

“The fire, Nell!” Mother gasped, suddenly wide awake.

Nell sat forward with a jolt, glancing over at the cold hearth. She threw off her cover and struggled to the fire. Was there still a whisper of smoke? Please let it be so. She poked at the ashes, finding a faint glow beneath the dust. She pressed some dry shrub against the embers. Leaning in, she could barely muster the strength to blow.

“It was your turn on watch this morning!” said Mother, at her side in an instant.

Nell blew again. The anxiety of her movements spread through the hut like contagion. Now she could hear Father and Mr Hawkins stirring.

Then came Father’s grumble. “What’s the matter, Ann?”

“The fire,” said Mother again.

“Dear Lord!” Father scrambled over just as a tiny sliver of flame began to rise. Nell almost wept at the sight of it.

“It’s saved,” she cried.



Now Mr Hawkins was wide awake. “That fire’s the only thing that stands between us and the grave!” he said.

“Everything’s fine, Mr Hawkins,” said Nell. She moved out of the way to show him.

“Don’t answer back,” said Father.

“She’ll be the death of us all,” Mr Hawkins said. Nell couldn’t hold back her tears. She pushed herself up and fled.

“Nellie!” her father called. But she didn’t want to face what came next. She stumbled through the clearing in the early light, only stopping to lace her boots once she’d reached the far side. Beyond lay the twisted trunks of the rātā forest. Nell ducked under the boughs, picking her way through the confusion of trees, away from the shouts.



At last, she stopped to catch her breath. Underneath the rushing wind came the low gurgle of water. She went a little farther and knelt down at the stream, suddenly thirsty. Despair lay like ballast on her chest. It wasn't just that the words in the hut were angry – they were also true. Fire kept them from the biting cold, gave them a way to cook, to light the beacons if they saw a sail. They'd nourished the flames all these months, born from the one precious match that had survived the shipwreck. Each of them took turns watching the fire, morning and night. And she'd almost let it go out.

When their ship perished on the rocks, groaning and shuddering to the last, only three lifeboats managed to escape into the fog. They'd lost sight of the other two. They hadn't seen hide nor hair of them since. Now it was only Nell and her parents and Mr Hawkins. Holding out through days of eating foul seabird and seal meat; chasing off bloated, repulsive flies; and worry – endless, gnawing worry. Was there any hope? Would they make it through the winter?

Suddenly, above her, Nell heard chatter. She glanced up at the canopy, spotting a bright green shape perched on a branch. The little parrot skipped along the branch and stopped to face her, tilting its red-crowned head one way, then the other. He'd come.

Nell was able to smile. "Boss!"

The kākāriki fluttered down. He stepped closer, his toes gripping the swaying wood, and tested the bark with his beak.

*What's wrong?* Nell imagined the bird saying.

"Hello, Boss," she said.

The parrot stared back. "Hello," he answered, his high-pitched voice making Nell laugh. "Hello, Nell," he said again.

"Good boy, Boss." She looked around for something to reward him, poking among the fallen leaves. Boss fluttered to the forest floor to join her, scratching at the ground, more chicken than parrot. She stroked the feathers on his back. Then, under some dead leaves, she spotted a prize for him. A tiny black weevil.



Nell sat down on her haunches to watch him eat. “If it wasn’t for you, Boss ...” But the parrot was too busy to talk. She remembered finding him as a fledgling, nesting in a tree trunk. Downy feathers caught in the bark were the only clue he was there. She’d reached in and got a gentle nip for her troubles. The fledgling’s chest and tail feathers were already as green as leaves, but fuzzy grey down still covered his head. It looked as if he’d forgotten to comb his hair. He had a head too big for his body and a beak that seemed to be curled in a smile. He always made Nell laugh, something that hadn’t happened often since the shipwreck.

To begin with, she kept him inside. The little parrot slept perched at her feet, close to the warm fire. He happily ate all the seeds they could find, the boss of the hut. She even taught him to talk. Then the time came for the kākāriki to spread his wings and rejoin the forest.

His meal finished, Boss skipped over to the stream. He studied it for a moment, then hopped in and began to ruffle his feathers.

“Does that feel good?” Nell asked.

His look of joy was obvious. *You should try it.*

“Too cold.” Instead, she picked up a stick and dropped it in the stream, watching it float along the burbling water. It drifted out of sight, and she was about to throw a much larger one when she saw Boss watching her intently. His beady eyes behind their mask of red were curious, alert. He gave a burst of song, paused, and then gave another.

What had he noticed? Nell glanced down at the wood in her hands. Now she saw it was quite wide. One side was almost flat, and it had a tapered end. A bit like the bow of a boat.

The kākāriki chattered again.

Then an idea showed itself – like another shiny treasure from the forest floor.

“Clever boy,” she gasped.

Nell felt for the sheath she kept tied to her waist and pulled out her knife. She began to whittle the wood, comforted by the sound of Boss rummaging in the background, sometimes calling.

With the idea burning in her head, the bow began to take a better shape. Then her impatient hands formed the sloping edges of the hull. She'd make a keel and a sail later. Nell fashioned the straight edge of the stern and dug a hole in the deck for a mast. She stopped to admire her progress. It needed work – lots more – but it was no longer dead wood. Now it was a ship in miniature. Nell glanced up at Boss for approval, busily shaping his beak along the branch. He stopped and spoke.

*Keep going.*

Nell whittled away to form the ship's deck. When she had a smooth platform, she began to carve the words that had tumbled into her head. W-A-N-T R-E-L-I-E-F. Mother would tell her what else to write.

It took her ages. Then, unable to sit still any longer, Nell got to her feet. She was desperate to get back to the hut, to show them her tiny ship, her lifeboat. The flowing water of the stream carried wood well enough. Why not the ocean? Stewart Island lay due north of here, Mr Hawkins had said. With the right current, the right winds, and the right message ...

She blurted goodbye to Boss and ran through the forest, the cry of her friend urging her on.

illustrations by Andrew Burdan



## Author's note

Motu Maha or the Auckland Islands are 465 kilometres south of Bluff, in the wild Southern Ocean. They lie on a shipping route between Australasia and Europe and have claimed at least nine ships. This story draws its inspiration from the tales of survivors of two shipwrecks, that of the *Grafton* (1864) and the *General Grant* (1866).

Being marooned on the Auckland Islands was a grim prospect. Cold and windswept, with little hope of rescue, daily life was a battle for castaways. A fire was essential for survival, as was making shelter and finding enough food. To lift spirits, it was important to keep busy. Clothing was made out of sealskin. One group of castaways even tamed some kākāriki for company. Thoughts also turned to how to attract help. People used birds with messages tied to their legs, signal fires, and miniature ships as rescue floats, just like the one made by my character, Nell.



Joseph and Mary Ann Jewell, Auckland Island castaways, wearing the sealskin clothing they made while on the island



A rescue float made by a castaway on the Auckland Islands

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