

The BOX

a screenplay by Leki Jackson-Bourke

CHARACTERS: BRONNY, SHIRLEY, NYSSA, BRIAN, LOLO (all students) and **WHAEA CARMEL** (a teacher)

An empty classroom. **BRONNY** is standing next to a box. **SHIRLEY** and **NYSSA** arrive.

SHIRLEY (looking around)

Where's Whaea Carmel? No drama club today?

BRONNY

She came and then she left. Look ... ta-da. Behold, the box of life.

BRONNY proudly presents the box.

SHIRLEY

What's in it?

BRONNY

Dunno, but I'm in charge.

NYSSA

Why aren't boxes ever like ... circle shaped?

SHIRLEY

Push it here, Bronny.

BRONNY (taking a step closer to the box)

No!

SHIRLEY

I just want to feel how heavy it is. I might be able to tell what's inside.

NYSSA

And like ... who invented boxes? They're so random, eh?

BRONNY

No, Nyssa, you're random.



NYSSA pokes at the box with her foot.

BRONNY

Nyssa, stop that.

NYSSA

What do you guys think is inside?

SHIRLEY

Gold.

NYSSA

Or biscuits?

SHIRLEY

Chocolate biscuits!

NYSSA and SHIRLEY

Mmm ...

BRONNY

We'll find out when Whaea gets back.

SHIRLEY

Bronny, I just need it for a second. Come on.

BRONNY

No. If Whaea Carmel wanted us to look, she would've said. And I'm in charge.

SHIRLEY

You're not the boss of drama club.

BRONNY

Whaea Carmel said, "Bronny, you have to protect the box at all costs. You're the kaitiaki."

SHIRLEY (looking sceptical)

Really? Aren't we all kaitiaki? What makes you so special? Because you were the first one here today?

NYSSA

Even the word box? Like where did it come from – box? Box. Box. Box.

BRONNY

I'm the eldest, and the eldest is always the kaitiaki.

SHIRLEY

Ummm, you're older by about three weeks.

BRONNY

Exactly, so respect your elders!

NYSSA (to Shirley)

Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

BRONNY

We're not opening it!

SHIRLEY

Yes, we are.

NYSSA and SHIRLEY begin to corner Bronny. **BRIAN and LOLO** enter.

BRIAN

What's up?

BRONNY, NYSSA, and SHIRLEY

Nothing!

LOLO

I sense tension. Where's Whaea Carmel? What's in the box?

SHIRLEY (glaring at Bronny)

We don't know. We don't know anything!

BRIAN

Obviously. Why are you guys acting weird?

SHIRLEY

We're not. He-he.

BRONNY

Yeah. He-he.

NYSSA

Guys, we're definitely acting weird ... he-he-he.

SHIRLEY

We're just trying to figure out what's inside the box.

BRONNY

No, we're not.

NYSSA

Box rhymes with fox. Maybe there's a connection? Hmm ...



BRIAN

Bro, this one time, my dad hid this box in our garage, and me and my brother found it and accidentally opened it, and it had three hundred thousand dollars in it!

SHIRLEY

Woah!

LOLO

Lies dot com Brian.

BRIAN

Nah, jokes ... it was just a box of DVDs from the nineties.

SHIRLEY

Wow, your dad must be old as.

NYSSA

What else could be inside the box? Maybe a fox, maybe some rocks?

LOLO

OMG! It could be a treasure map with a skull that says X marks the spot.

SHIRLEY

How old are you? That only happens in movies.

BRIAN

What if it's a box of rats? Oj, this one time, our old house had heaps of rats, and we used to name them after all the uncles we didn't like.

LOLO

Disrespectful!

NYSSA

OMG, I love rats. They're so cute.

LOLO

Ewww!

BRIAN

But seriously, what's in the box?

BRONNY

We don't know. We're waiting till Whaea gets back.

Silence. **BRIAN and SHIRLEY** whisper together.

BRIAN

We think we should open it.



BRONNY

For the millionth time, we're not opening the box! I'm the kaitiaki, and I already said no.

BRIAN

Well, I'm a kaitiaki, too. My grandpa was one, so that means I'm one.

NYSSA

If I'm your friend, then can I be one, too?

BRONNY

A kaitiaki can only be chosen by an older person. Sorry, overruled.

LOLO

That's not true. You guys really don't understand how it works, do you?

SHIRLEY

I think we should vote. Let's all be kaitiaki. All in favour say āe.

SHIRLEY, NYSSA, BRIAN, and LOLO

Āe.

BRONNY

Not āe.

BRIAN

Sweet. Majority rules. So, are we gonna open the box now?

BRONNY

We can't. Whaea Carmel said not to. The box is sacred.

SHIRLEY

What? That's not what you said before.

NYSSA

Guys, maybe it is sacred. Bronny's right. We should wait.

SHIRLEY

Aww, boo-hoo. You're outnumbered.

BRIAN

Let's do it!

SHIRLEY

Let's goo!

*The group is split: **BRONNY** and **NYSSA** versus **SHIRLEY**, **BRIAN**, and **LOLO**. They start to jostle one another. **WHAEA CARMEL** enters.*

WHAEA CARMEL

Ahh, good timing. I see things are getting interesting ...



BRONNY

Sorry, Whaea. I tried to stop them.

SHIRLEY

Me too.

NYSSA (*dramatically*)

They started fighting. It got real bad ...

WHAEA CARMEL

Sorry, kids. I was double-booked. Mr Ririnui has Covid, and I said I'd coach the touch rugby team at lunchtime. I didn't want to let you down, so I left you a box ...

BRONNY (*glaring at the others*)

You're not the one who's let people down.

SHIRLEY (*casually*)

So what's in the box, Whaea? Bronny was desperate to know.

WHAEA CARMEL

Nothing.

BRIAN

Huh!

BRONNY

Nothing?

LOLO

It's like the *opposite* of a treasure map!

NYSSA

I told you boxes were random!

WHAEA CARMEL *looks at her watch.*

WHAEA CARMEL

Oops, almost forgot. Ms Wilson's at the physio. And I said I'd coach her netball team too. Triple-booked! Right, your new task ...

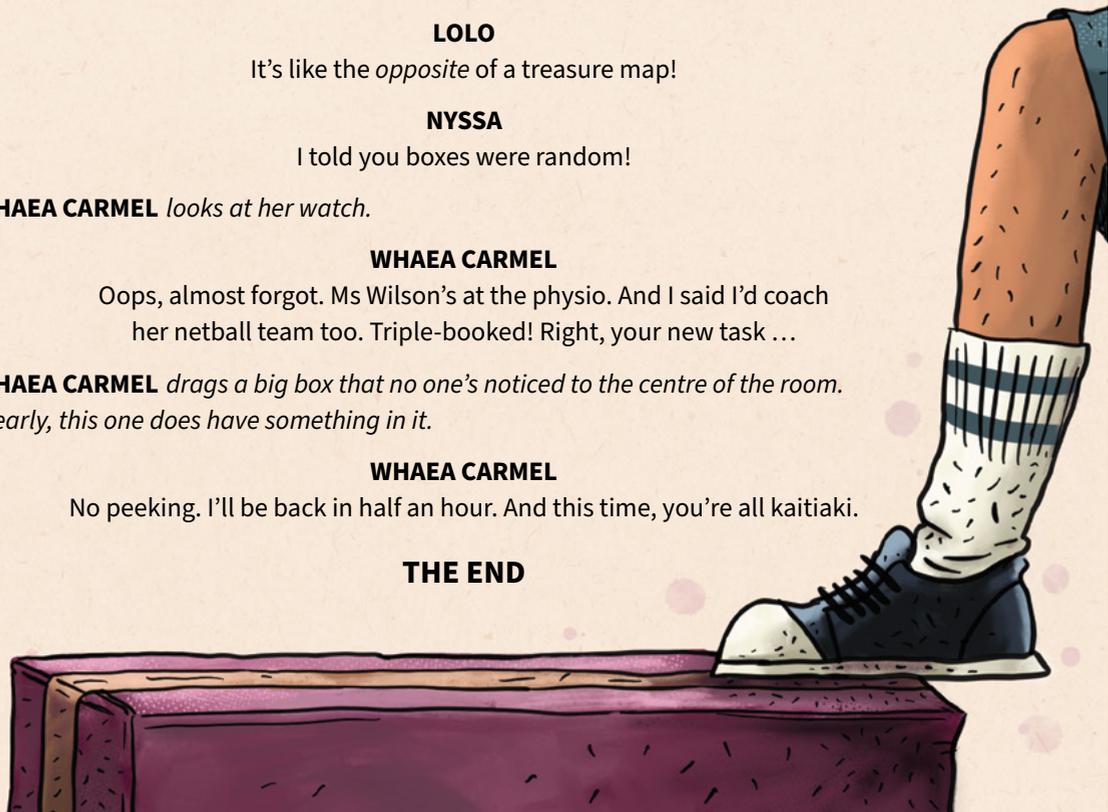
WHAEA CARMEL *drags a big box that no one's noticed to the centre of the room. Clearly, this one does have something in it.*

WHAEA CARMEL

No peeking. I'll be back in half an hour. And this time, you're all kaitiaki.

THE END

illustrations by Minky Stapleton



The Box

by Leki Jackson-Bourke

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