

SCHOOL MAGAZINE

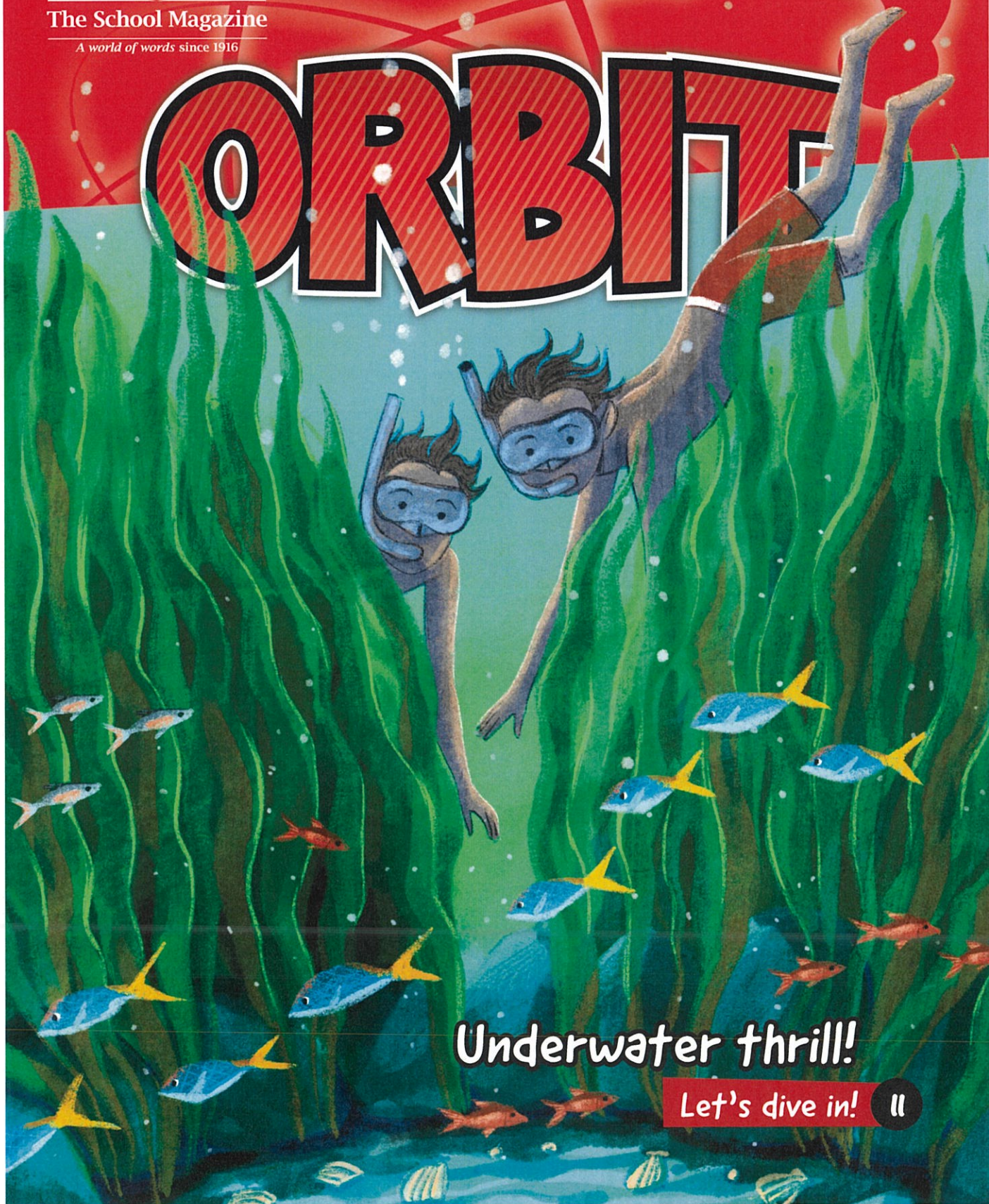


The School Magazine

A world of words since 1916

July 2021 | Issue No.6

ORBIT



Underwater thrill!

Let's dive in!

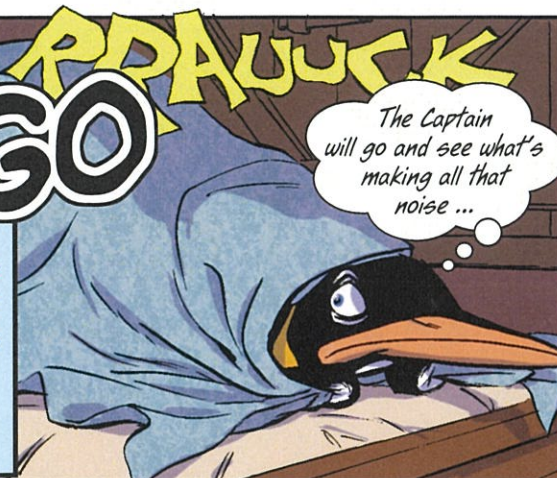


Captain CONGO

by Ruth Starke
and Greg Holfeld

The Perils of Pug

Episode Six:
Noises in the night continue
to make Pug very nervous.



The Captain
will go and see what's
making all that
noise ...



No, hang on
a minute ...

The Captain's
not here ...

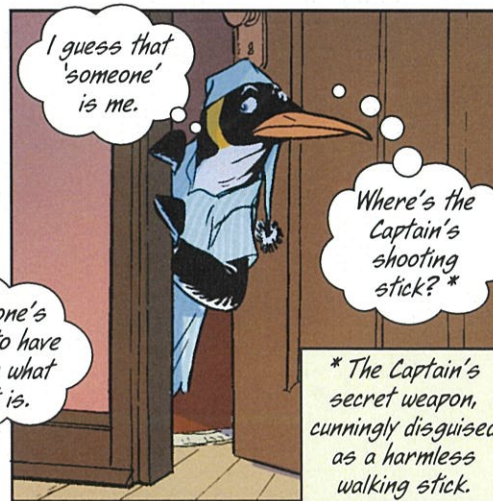


Maybe it's
nothing to
worry about.

KROAA HUUC GRRK



Someone's
going to have
to see what
that is.



I guess that
'someone'
is me.

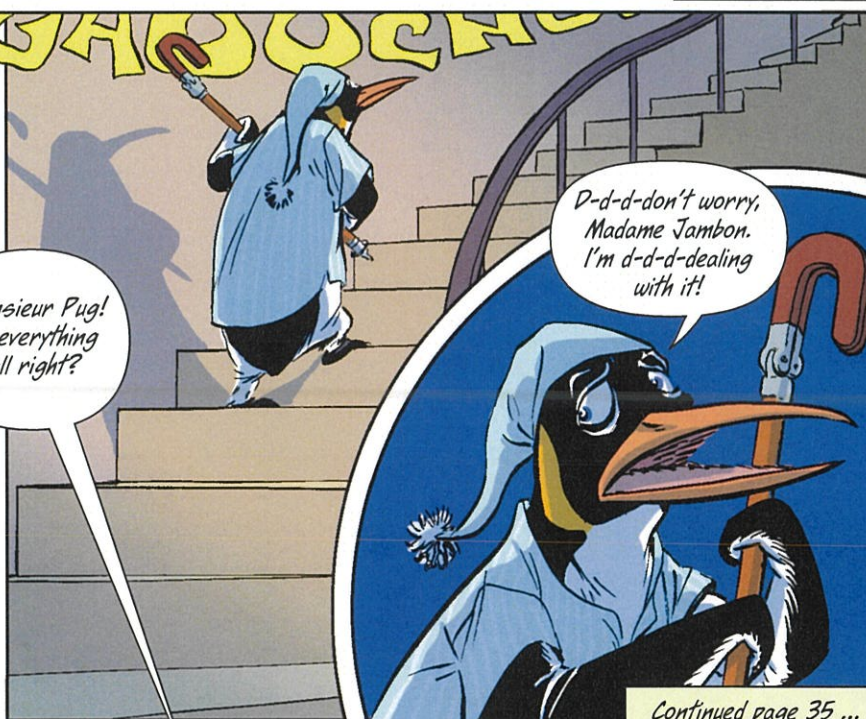
Where's the
Captain's
shooting
stick? *

* The Captain's
secret weapon,
cunningly disguised
as a harmless
walking stick.



Here
goes!

Monsieur Pug!
Is everything
all right?



D-d-d-don't worry,
Madame Jambon.
I'm d-d-d-dealing
with it!

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ORBIT

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FRONT COVER Our Reef
illustrated by Anna Bron

More Wild and Crazy Adventures!

story by Bill Condon | illustrated by Tohby Riddle

WELCOME, THRILLSEEKERS! My name is Bradley D Mented—the D stands for Dashing—and I’m the star of *Wild and Crazy Adventures*! It’s the television show that is all GO! GO! GO! So grab some popcorn, strap on a seatbelt and a crash helmet and come along with me as I throw fear to the wind and jump out of a plane—without a parachute!

Who needs a parachute when they’re wearing the fantastic Inflata Suit? Never heard of it? No-one has! It’s brand new! No-one has even

tested it! I’m going to be the first because that’s what daredevils do! Yee-ha! Now, without further ado, it’s time to open the hatch! Hold on to your hats, and get ready for an amazing adventure, folks. I’m going to jump!

‘Don’t do it, Bradley. I’ll be very cross if you do.’

‘Please let go of my hand, Mummy.’

‘I will not. You’re being a silly boy.’

‘Not so loud. We’re on television.’

‘I don’t care. If you jump you’ll have to take me with you.’



'Oh all right. Here we go ...'

AAAAAAARRGGGGGGHHHHHHH!

'Don't be such a wimp, Bradley.'

'I'm scared of heights, Mummy, and we're falling so fast!'

'But don't forget you're wearing the Inflata Suit, so there's nothing to worry about—right?'

'That's true. After twenty seconds the suit will fill with air and we'll float harmlessly to the ground.'

'That makes me feel a lot better ... except that according to my watch we've already been falling for twenty seconds.'

'What a coincidence, my watch says the same.'

'Bradley, the ground is getting awfully close.'

'I know! Too close for comfort!'

'Something's wrong, Bradley! We're goners!'

'Oh no! Could this be the end of Bradley D Mented?'

'And his mummy?'

It's terribly terrifying, but we have to look on the bright side. Right this second the ratings are shooting through the roof! We're going to go viral with millions of hits!

'Golly gosh!'

'What is it, Mummy?'

'We're not falling down anymore!'

'You're right! It's a miracle! The Inflata Suit is filling with air!'



'We're falling up!'

'Hurray! We're soaring to the heavens!'

'But Bradley, how do we stop soaring?'

'Good question. I'm sure there's a simple answer to it. I'll ring the inventor, Professor Oopy.'

'Professor Oopy ... hmm ... what's his first name?'

'Larry.'

'L Oopy ... very interesting.'
'Can't talk now, Mummy. His phone's ringing.'
'Hello.'
'Professor Oopy?'
'The one and only.'
'Right ... I'm testing your Inflata Suit and I've run into a small problem.'
'Really? I was told by the television station they were going to use a dummy to test it.'



'Are you sure?'
'Yes. I have the email they sent me right here. It says: 'We're going to use Bradley—he's a dummy.'
'I see ... anyway, the problem, Professor, is that the suit keeps going up and I don't know how to make it drop. Any ideas?'
'Of course. It's very simple. You just press the Down button.'
'Easy-peasy. Thanks for your help.'
'Any time. Have a nice day.'
'Um, hold on, Professor—I can't find the Down button.'
'You can't? That's odd. Wait a second ... well, how about that! It's in my drawer!'
'So how do I get down?'
'Is there a big red button that says HELP?'
'No, I can't see it.'
'Oh, bother. There's someone at the front door. Don't go away. I'll be right back.'
'Is he going to help us, Bradley?'
'Yes, Mummy. It won't be long now.'

* * *

Two hours later ...

'Professor! Professor! Where are you?'
'I'm right here. Sorry. I forgot you were there. I had to make tea for my guests. Now what was this about again?'
'The big red button that says HELP.'



'Oh yes, you'll be pleased to know I found it in my filing cabinet.'

'That's great, but what about me? I'm going higher and higher!'

'Don't worry. I've got some good news for you.'

'Cool! Tell me!'

'What goes up, must come down. Maybe not today or tomorrow, or even next week, but eventually. Okay?'

'Um, okay.'

'Glad I could help. Bye!'

Click!

'Did he tell you how to get down, Bradley?'

'Not exactly, Mummy. We might have to stay up here for a little while.'

'How long?'

'Put it this way. You know how my show is usually made up of short episodes?'

'Yes.'

'Well, I think this week's episode looks like it will be a miniseries.'

'Oh, dearie me.'

Didn't I tell you this would be an amazing adventure, folks? And it isn't over yet! Will we make it out of this alive?

'I don't think so, Bradley.'

'Either do I, Mummy, but there's only one way to find out!'

Tune in next week, Thrillseekers, for another action-packed episode of *Wild and Crazy Adventures!* ■



Monster Mollusc

poem by Jenny Blackford | illustrated by Greg Holfeld

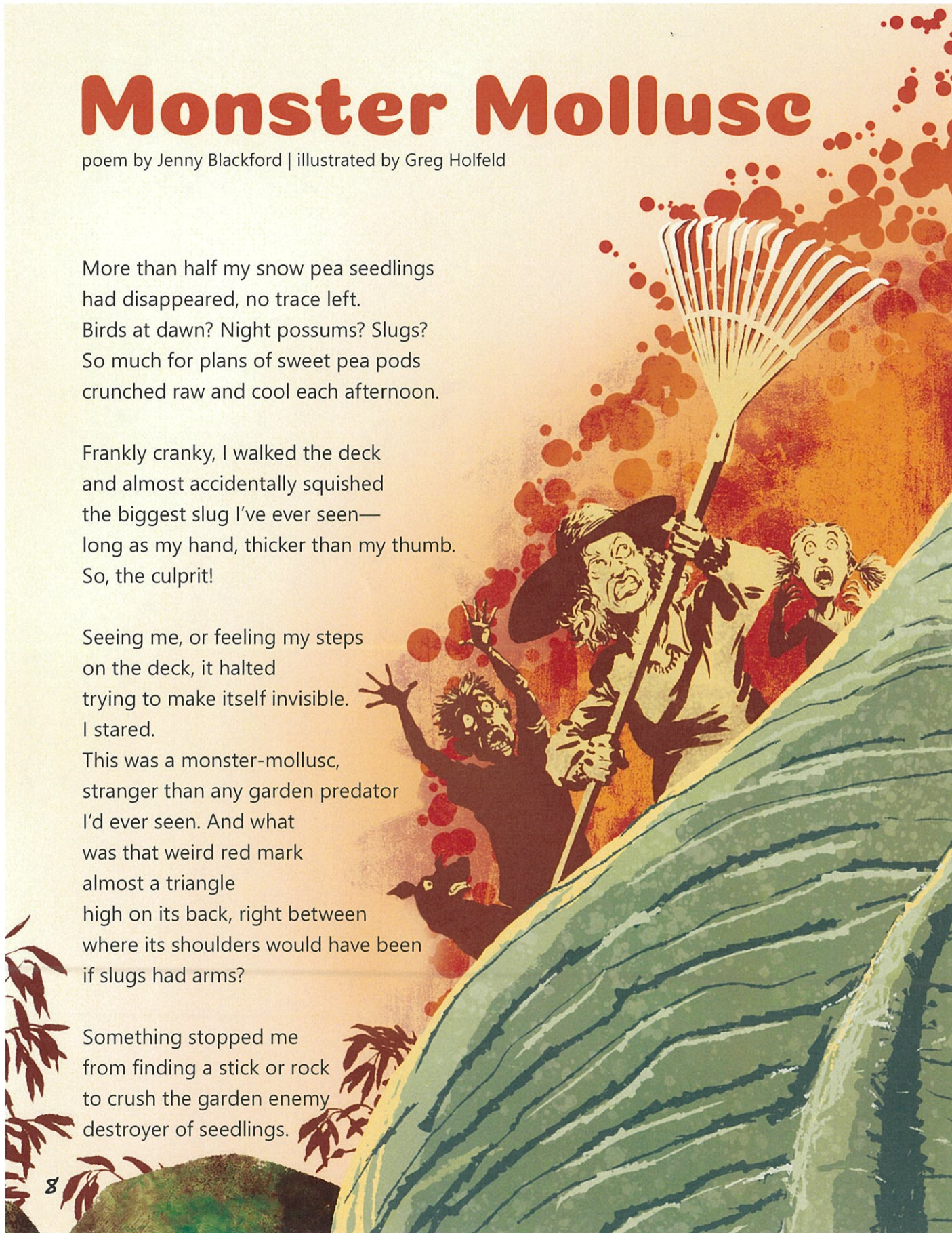
More than half my snow pea seedlings
had disappeared, no trace left.
Birds at dawn? Night possums? Slugs?
So much for plans of sweet pea pods
crunched raw and cool each afternoon.

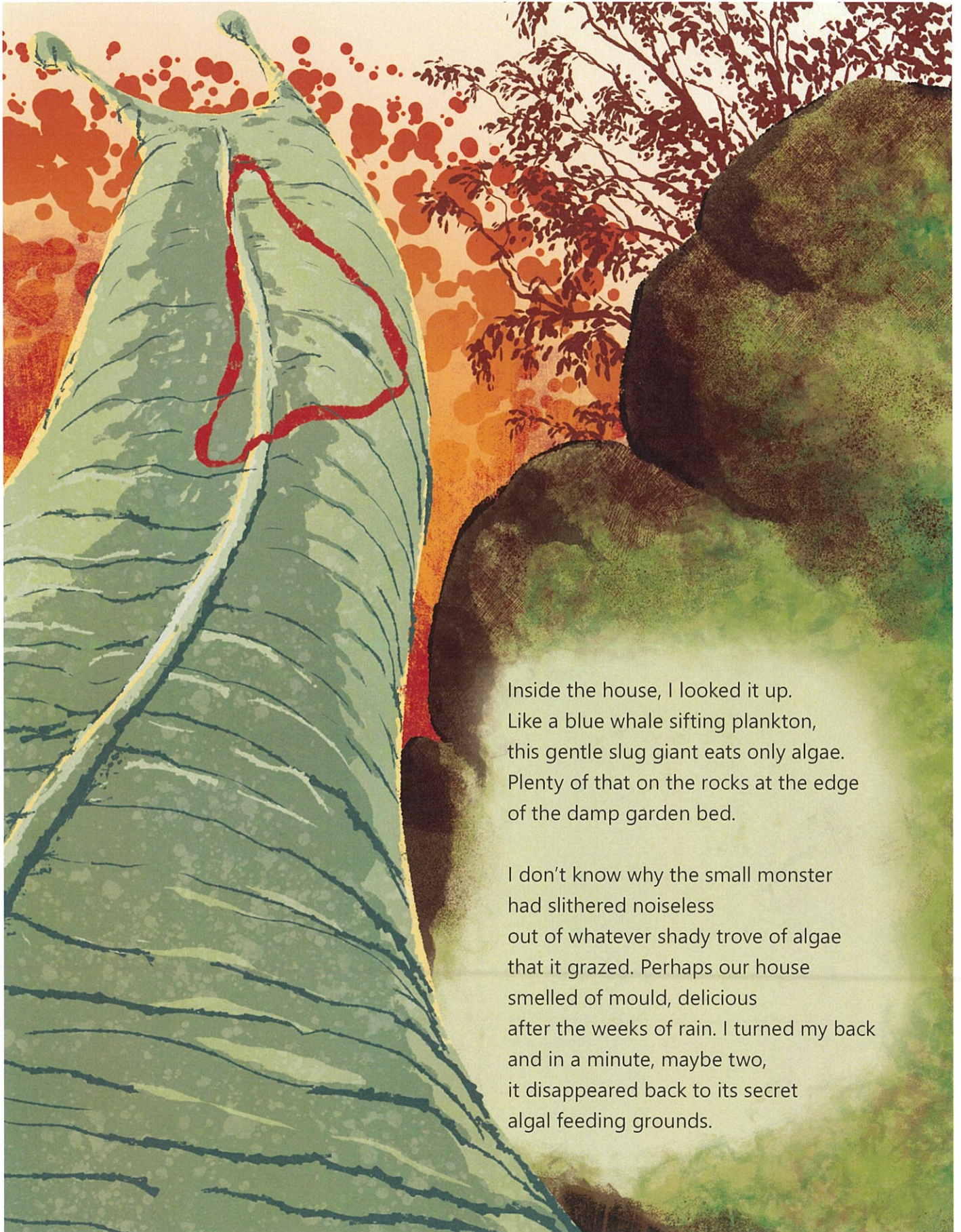
Frankly cranky, I walked the deck
and almost accidentally squished
the biggest slug I've ever seen—
long as my hand, thicker than my thumb.
So, the culprit!

Seeing me, or feeling my steps
on the deck, it halted
trying to make itself invisible.
I stared.

This was a monster-mollusc,
stranger than any garden predator
I'd ever seen. And what
was that weird red mark
almost a triangle
high on its back, right between
where its shoulders would have been
if slugs had arms?

Something stopped me
from finding a stick or rock
to crush the garden enemy
destroyer of seedlings.





Inside the house, I looked it up.
Like a blue whale sifting plankton,
this gentle slug giant eats only algae.
Plenty of that on the rocks at the edge
of the damp garden bed.

I don't know why the small monster
had slithered noiseless
out of whatever shady trove of algae
that it grazed. Perhaps our house
smelled of mould, delicious
after the weeks of rain. I turned my back
and in a minute, maybe two,
it disappeared back to its secret
algal feeding grounds.

Sylphie's Squizzes



How Wormy Oysters Make Pretty Pearls

article by Kate Walker

Oysters are extraordinary molluscs!



If gritty sand gets into an oyster shell, the oyster can easily flush it out. Just as well, too. Oysters live in very sandy places. But if a sea-worm gets into an oyster's shell, the oyster is in trouble. The worm latches onto the oyster's flesh and the oyster cannot spit it out. So it does something else.

The oyster starts coating the annoying worm in a hard, shiny substance called *nacre*. The worm is soon sealed up, but the oyster keeps on coating it anyway. Year after year the layers of nacre build up, finally producing a beautiful, natural pearl. Though if a hole is drilled through that pearl to make a necklace, a little mucky ooze will dribble out. That's what's left of the worm trapped inside.

Before the 1900s all pearls naturally grew this way. Then a poor Japanese carpenter, named Mikimoto Kōkichi, found a different way of growing them. He inserted tiny chips of mother-of-pearl into oysters. Mother-of-pearl is the shiny, rainbow-coloured coating inside seashells. It, too, is made of nacre but is not valuable like pearls. However, a tiny piece inserted into an oyster shell tricks the oyster. The oyster starts coating that tiny piece with more and more nacre. Finally it produces what is called a *cultured pearl*. And no mucky worm inside either! ■



Mikimoto Kōkichi

Our Reef

story by Sue Murray
illustrated by Anna Bron

I RUN STRAIGHT into the water. Gus follows more slowly.

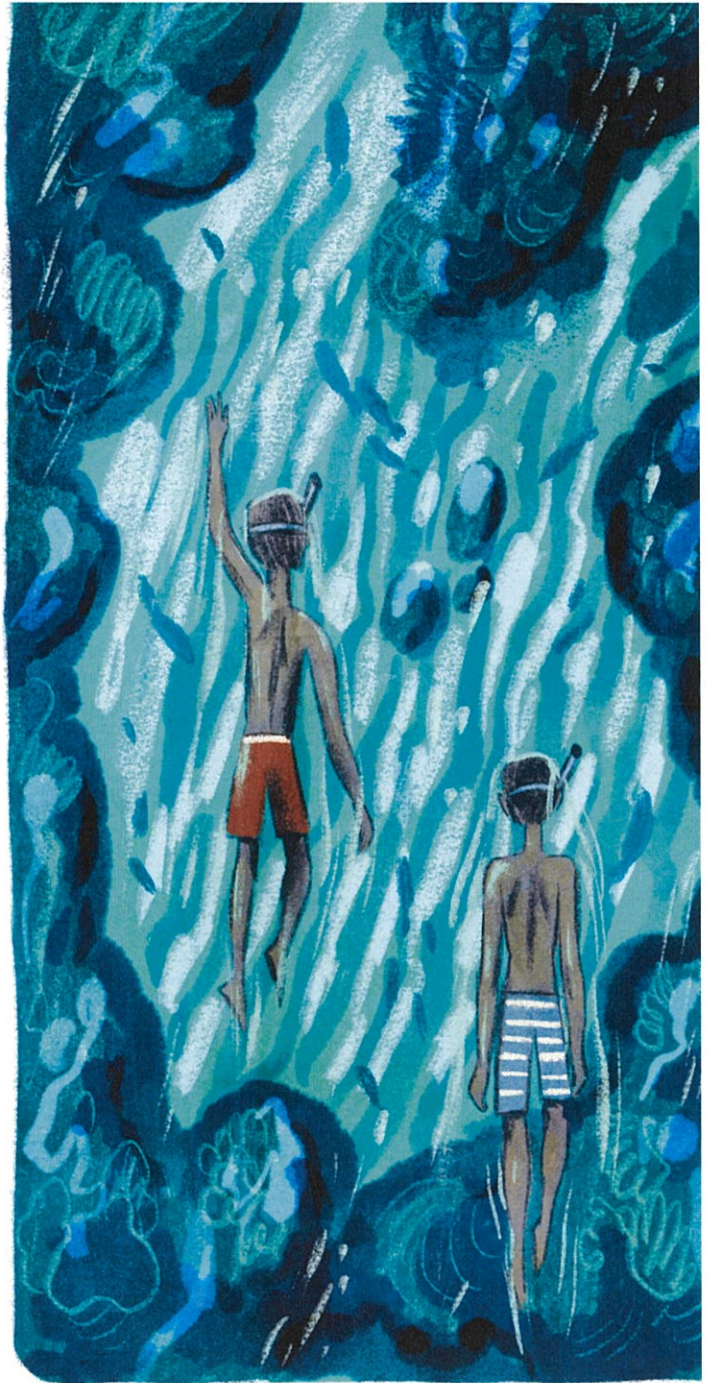
'Whoo hoo!' I yell, splashing him. It's our first swim of the season.

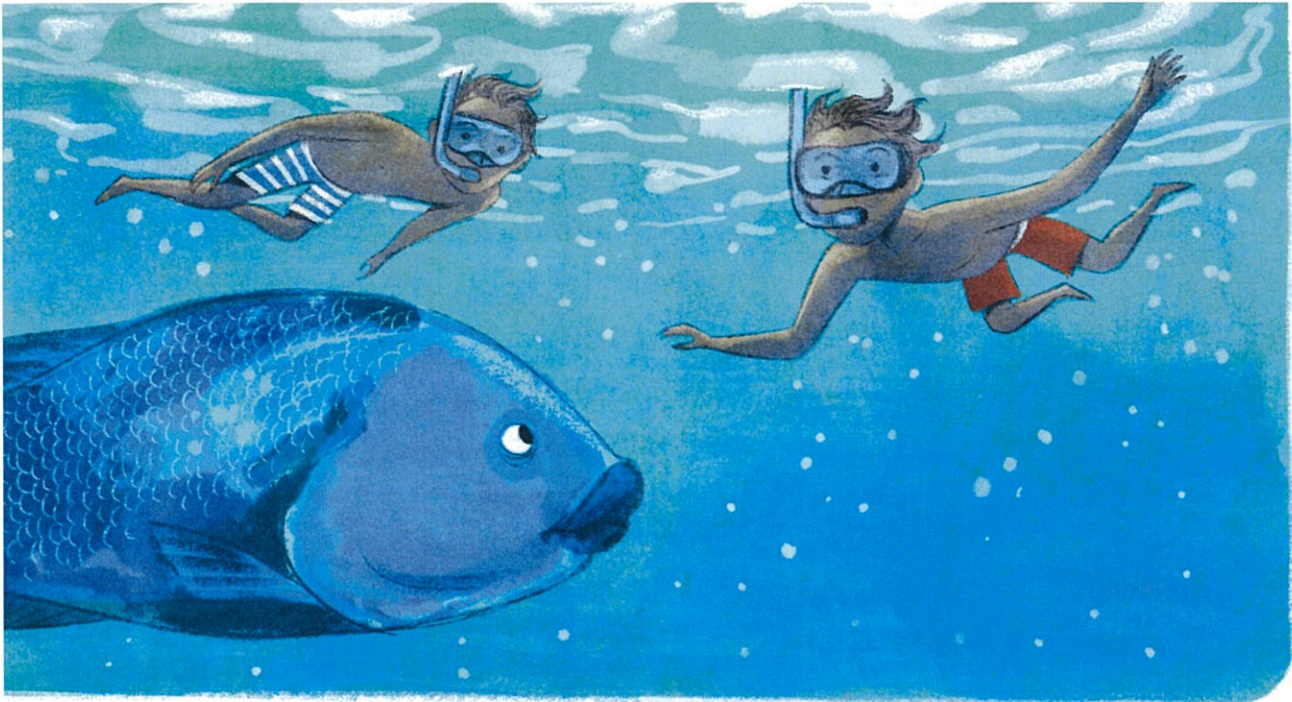
'Boys!' Mum laughs. 'I'm going to do a lap of the bay. No going past the big rock, okay?'

Mum pulls on her flippers and she's off. I tug on my mask, bite the mouthpiece of my snorkel and dive under the water. I watch a school of whiting, waiting for Gus. He takes ages. Then he swims past me. The chase is on.

We don't need to talk about where we're going. We're swimming out to our reef. In our bay. I learnt to swim here. Before then, Dad would tow me on his back. I'd splutter and cough and laugh and kick. He'd say, 'Get ready, Rory!' I'd take a big breath and Dad would dive down, then swim along the bottom with powerful frog kicks, skimming the sand. I'd open my eyes and see the sunlight streaming past me, and big bubbles as Dad let out some air.

I race past Gus. He's eighteen months older than me, but I'm a better swimmer. Dad always called me his little fish. Gus is better at things like Lego. Dad always said that Gus will grow up to be an architect like Mum.





I yell, 'Look!' to Gus. It sounds like a dolphin's squeal through my snorkel but Gus gets it. He sees it too. A blue groper! Our blue groper. Garry. We know him because he has a dent in his side. We reckon he might have survived a shark attack. Our whole family love blue gropers. They're like Labradors. They follow us. We used to pat them, but I found out it's not good for them if we do that. Dad told us once that all gropers are born female. Dad said that when a group of gropers needs a male, one of the females turns into a male. I didn't believe Dad then, but I've done a project on blue gropers this year and it's true!

I stop for a moment. We're near the big rock now. I see Mum over on the other side of the bay. She swims with steady strokes. She loves snorkelling as much as I do. I know she's keeping an eye on Gus and me, but we're old enough to be out here alone. We were last summer too.

Last summer, Gus and I built our reef. It took all summer. We picked up rocks from the bottom of the bay and carried them over to the big rock. The bay isn't deep but it's hard work, carrying rocks. We dived down, picked up a rock and took giant strides until we had to let go and streak up to the

surface to get some air. Sometimes friends joined in. And sometimes we'd come back and find that strangers had added to the reef.

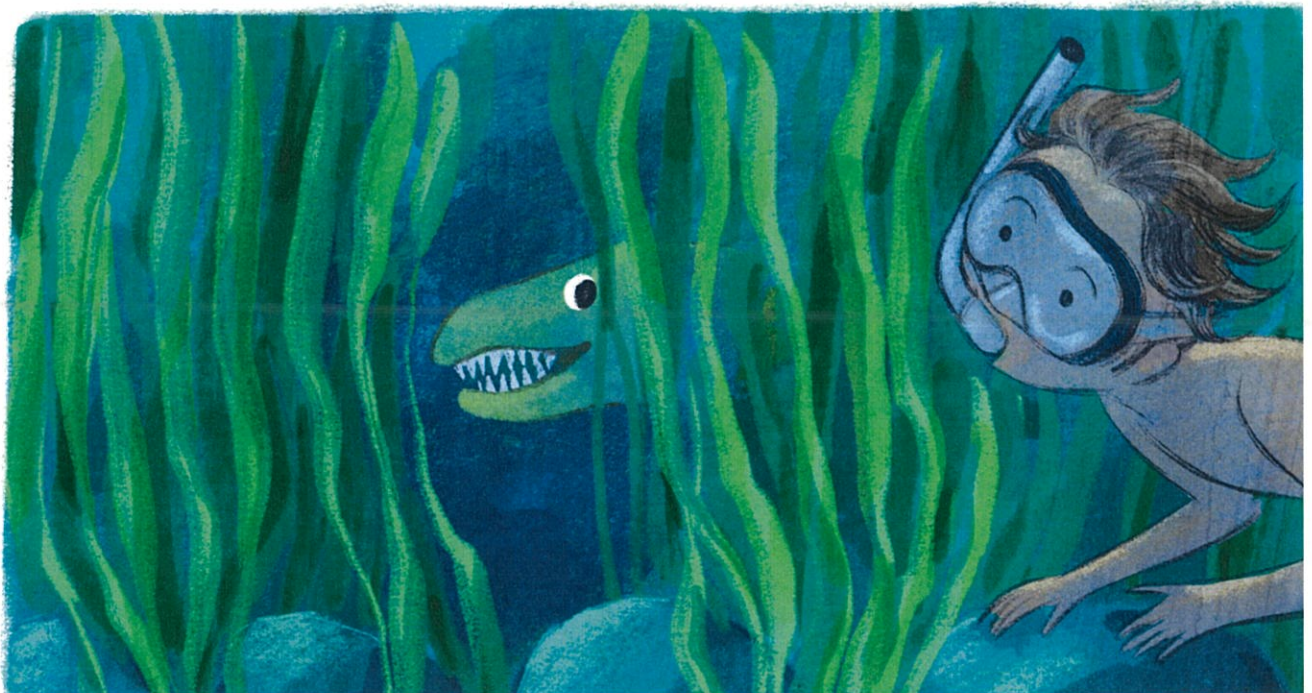
Garry the groper is watching me now. I hope he remembers me, remembers the boy who turns over rocks to expose sea urchins. Garry loves munching on sea urchins. Last summer, he swam up to me and got me to pluck a sea urchin spike out of his huge bottom lip. That's real trust, I reckon.

For now, though, I don't try to swim too close to Garry, just in case he needs time to get to know me again. A Maori Wrasse flashes by my mask. Another time I might chase it, but I'm keen to see the reef. Has it survived the storms and wild seas of winter?

I wait for Gus. It's only fair that we dive down together. He reaches me. I nod. We both take deep breaths and duck dive down.

There it is. Our circle of stones, covered now by seaweed. Yellowtails cruise around the inner rim. I hold onto the largest rock. Gus doesn't. He goes up. So he doesn't see. Right next to my hand there's a movement, then a face. A glint of green, and a grin of razor-sharp teeth.

I shoot to the surface and spit my snorkel out of my mouth.





‘Gus!’ I yell. ‘You’ve got to see this!’

A few nearby swimmers swing around but I don’t care if I’ve scared them. Mum is standing in the shallows now, signalling that it’s time for us to come in, but I have to show Gus what I saw. I take a deep breath and dive down. So does Gus.

I show him what’s made its home in our reef—a moray eel! We high five under the water—not easy—and we both laugh like loons. Dad always said that. It turns out that loons are birds.

As we swim in, I think: *We’ve made a whole ecosystem!* Dad would have loved it.

Gus and I reckon that if we come back as animals, Dad would be a dolphin. I miss him every day, but out here, in our bay, he’s with us somehow.

Gus squeals and points. I see it. A stingaree! We follow it as it cruises towards the shore. ■

My, my, this story is full of heart and marine life!



Tricky Challenge Time!

activity by
Mr Erasmus

Mr Erasmus's Slimetacular Puzzler

By my whiskers, slimy molluscs are such fascinating creatures underwater. Can you find these slimy mollusc words? They could be sliding upwards, downwards, backwards, forwards or floating about in all four diagonal directions.



DANK
GLOP
GOO
GULP
GUNK
ICK
JELLY
LEECH
LIMPET
MARINE
MIRY
MOLLUSC
MULCH
MUCUS
MUSSEL
OCTOPUS

OOZE
OYSTER
SCALLOP
SKIN
SLIME
SLUDGE
SLUG
SLURP
SNAIL
SQUID
SQUISH
SWEAT
WET
WORMY
YUCK
YUM

M	U	S	S	E	L	P	L	U	G	O	O
A	O	S	W	E	A	T	J	E	L	L	Y
R	Y	L	I	M	P	E	T	I	O	M	S
I	M	U	L	C	H	U	A	D	R	U	T
N	S	S	E	U	N	N	M	O	A	Y	E
E	Q	P	E	Y	S	A	W	I	O	N	R
G	U	R	C	M	U	C	U	S	R	Z	K
D	I	U	H	G	I	C	A	L	E	Y	E
U	S	L	D	U	I	C	K	L	W	E	T
L	H	S	I	L	K	N	U	G	L	O	P
S	K	I	N	S	U	P	O	T	C	O	T
!	E	M	I	L	S	D	I	U	Q	S	P



Dreamstime

Draw a ring around each word as you find it, and the leftover letters will spell out the answer to the riddle on the right ...

Q: What did the sea slug's friends say to it when it came last in the ocean race?

A: _____

Answer on page **34**

You Know Me

poem by Julia Wakefield
illustrated by Marjorie Crosby-Fairall

I hunt in the shadows beyond neon lights
I lurk in the dark corners under your bed
I am the hammer that pounds in your chest
when you know you have lied and you wish you were dead
I'm the flock of black moths churning round in your belly
that chokes up your throat when it's your turn to speak
I'm the spanner that loosens the screws in your knees
when the bigger boys tease you and call you a freak.

Find me in the eye of the deer on the run
Escape me you cannot: I live in your brain
Ask me no favours: you know I give none
Running away only sharpens the pain.

My name you will find in the lines I've just spoken
Shout it out loud—and my spell will be broken.





Scalpel, Needle ... Leech

article by Cheryl Bullock
illustrated by Marjorie Crosby-Fairall

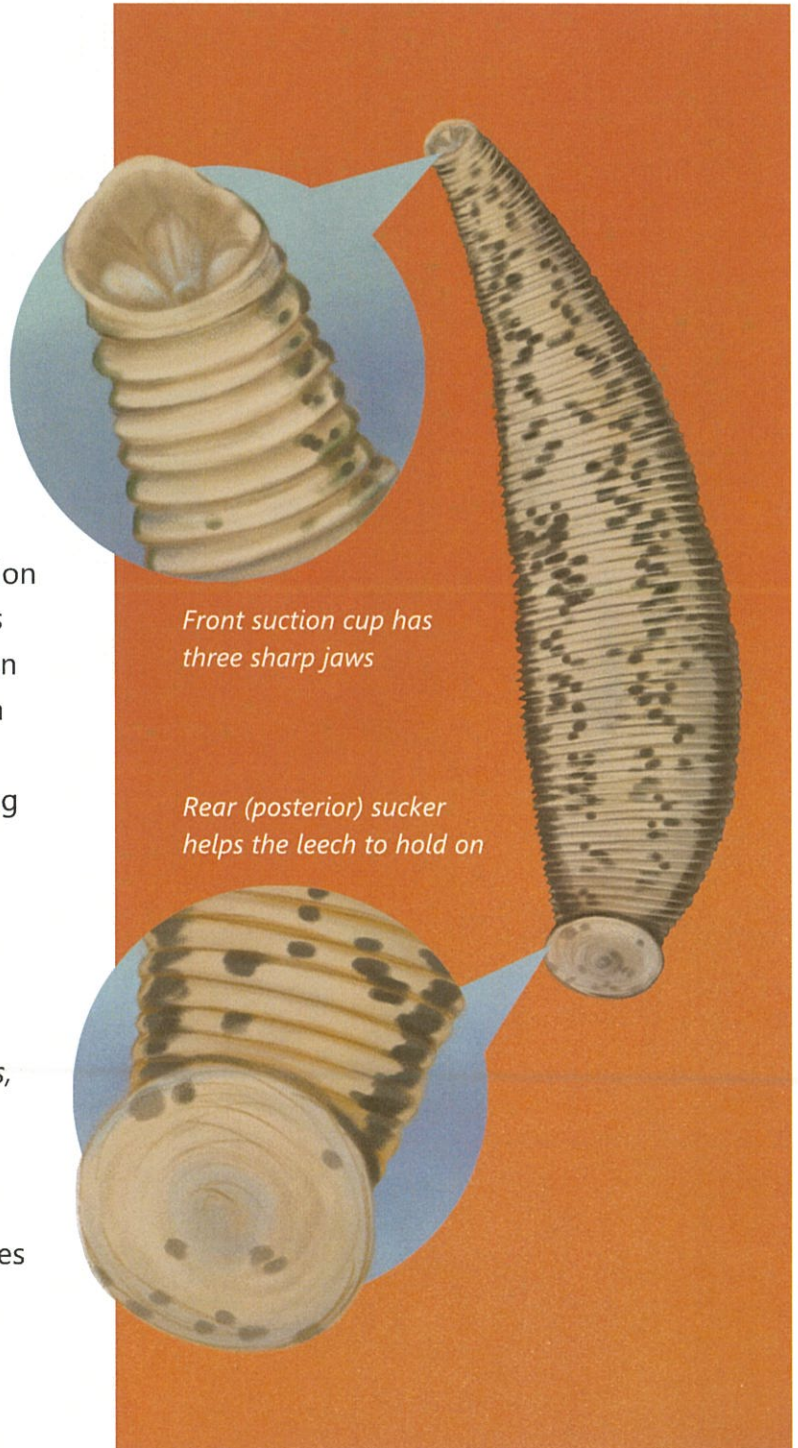


They wriggle,
bite and feast on blood—
yet some doctors think
they're awesome!

Slippery suckers

Leeches are spineless worms that slither, slide and attach themselves to a host with the help of a rear suction cup. While the rear suction cup helps the leech to hold on, the front suction cup has three sharp jaws that make a Y-shaped bite. The leech then sucks blood from its host animal—including humans—until it is sated, when it detaches itself.

There are more than 600 species of leeches, though only fifteen of the species have ever been used for medical purposes. *Hirudo medicinalis*, or medicinal leeches, are making headlines today for their healing abilities, but these creepy creatures have been used in medical procedures since ancient times.



*Front suction cup has
three sharp jaws*

*Rear (posterior) sucker
helps the leech to hold on*

A long history

It is widely believed that medicinal leeches are as old as the pyramids and that they can be seen in the hieroglyphics painted on the pyramid walls in Egypt. Used for *bloodletting*—a procedure to remove blood from a patient—for many centuries leeches were used to treat everything from headaches to life-threatening infections. Well-meaning doctors believed that all sorts of ailments, including insomnia and even obesity, resided in the patient's 'bad blood'. And who better to get rid of that bad blood than an insatiable leech?

Toward the beginning of the 19th century, leech therapy swept through Europe and America, along with Asia and the Middle East. It was widely believed that almost every part of the human body could benefit from the healing powers of leeches. Then something happened in the 1930s that would change the medical world forever—the invention of antibiotics. Antibiotics were found to cure infections fast and effectively, causing many people to abandon the use of leech therapy completely. If leeches were no longer needed to fight infections, what role, if any, would they have in the medical world?

Bring on the leeches

Thanks to the incredible advances in medical technology, surgeons are now capable of performing microsurgery—an intricate procedure that uses a microscope and miniature precision instruments. Microsurgery involves the transplantation of living tissue, including the reattachment of body parts, skin grafts and plastic surgery. So where does the ancient practice of leech therapy fit in with something as advanced as microsurgery?



A Medieval illustration of a patient waiting to be healed with leeches

Alamy

After surgery to reattach a body part—a finger, for example—the blood supply is sometimes damaged. Blood can flow into the finger, but it can't leave again. The arteries that carry the blood to the finger are relatively thick and are much easier to attach than the tiny veins that take the blood away. When the old blood can't get away, it starts to clot and stops new blood from supplying oxygen and nutrients to the newly-reattached finger. Sadly, this means that the finger will often die.

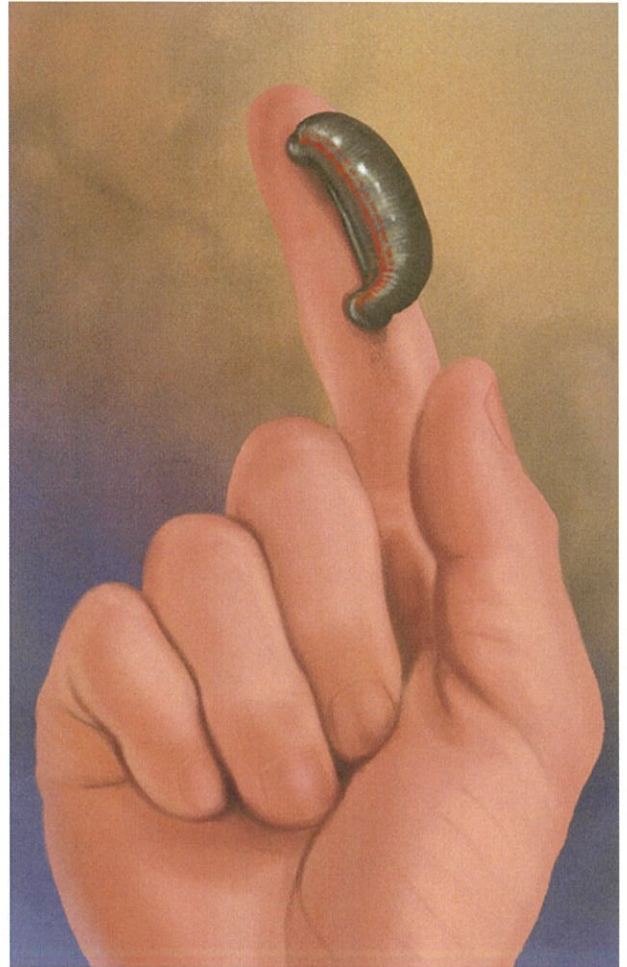
Call in the leeches! This is where the slow sucking ability of the leech becomes vitally important. The leech makes a small bite in the finger or graft and releases an anti-clotting substance called *hirudin*. This substance makes its way into the bloodstream and stops it from clotting. The leech sucks the blood slowly and steadily, then eventually falls off.

Thanks to that miraculous anti-clotting substance, the wound continues to bleed slowly, allowing the old blood to escape through the leech bite. While this incredible procedure can mean the difference between a successful and unsuccessful reattachment, for the leech, it's all in a day's work.

A different type of farm

While it's clear that leech therapy is alive and well in many hospitals, where exactly do the leeches come from? Brian and Carol Woodbridge set up a medicinal leech farm in Victoria over twenty years ago. They supply thousands of leeches each year to hospitals around Australia.

The Woodbridges have spent years fine-tuning their farming techniques and use temperature-controlled shipping containers to house the large breeding tanks. For these Victorian farmers,



the fact that their leeches can help save an arm or a leg is certainly an added bonus. And while most people cringe at the thought of leeches, Carol Woodbridge is actually fond of them. 'You get attached to them,' she says. 'And they get attached to you.'

As successful as the Woodbridge's farm is, it is still a very small operation compared to other parts of the world. Leech breeding has become a multimillion-dollar industry overseas, with some companies developing creams and cosmetics from leech saliva.

So next time you're bushwalking and find a thick, black, shiny leech feasting on your blood, try to remember that these little critters are more than just shiny bloodsuckers ... they're medical marvels. ■



Did you know?

- After a good feed, leeches don't need to eat again for 6 months.
- The giant Amazon leech is the world's longest leech, growing to a length of 46 centimetres.
- The brain of a leech is segmented into 32 independent-working parts.
- The bite of a leech is painless, due to the natural anaesthetic it produces.
- A leech has 300 tiny teeth.
- Leeches can bite through a hippopotamus's hide.



Dreamstime

Unexpected

story by T Lynn Slater | illustrated by Sylvia Morris



SHOCK WAVES ZINGED THROUGH ME. Sitting down, I held my head in my hands while I let the news soak in. I couldn't think of anything to say.

'Are you all right, Luke? We know it's been a long time coming, but we thought you'd be pleased.' Mum spread her hands over her belly while Dad put his arm around her shoulder.

I couldn't believe it. After all the years of me asking for a brother or sister and not getting one, it was finally happening. I was going to be a big brother, a really big brother—an eleven-year-old big brother.

'Don't tell anyone yet, love,' Mum said, 'just in case something goes wrong.'

'Okay.'

Later that day, I got out my Gamestation and played *Rat Quest*. It was impossible to concentrate properly. My rat kept falling into a hole, even though I was only on level two. It was useless. Turning off my game, I gave the baby thing my full attention.

Every way I looked at it, a new kid in the house was going to be a disaster—a biggie, like the end of the world times a hundred. For a start, it was way too late. I'd given up on the idea. I'd got used to seeing Pie and Chips, our two fox terriers, as stand-in brothers. It was too late to have a real brother or sister in the same school as me, too late to play soccer or climb trees with them. Even worse, I was nearly old enough to babysit! Mum and Dad would probably leave me with a kid who wasn't even toilet-trained.

The most sensible thing was to pretend none of it was happening.

'Is your mum having a baby?' kids at school started to ask.

'No,' I'd say. (Well, Mum *did* say not to tell anyone).

'Her belly is so big; are you sure?'

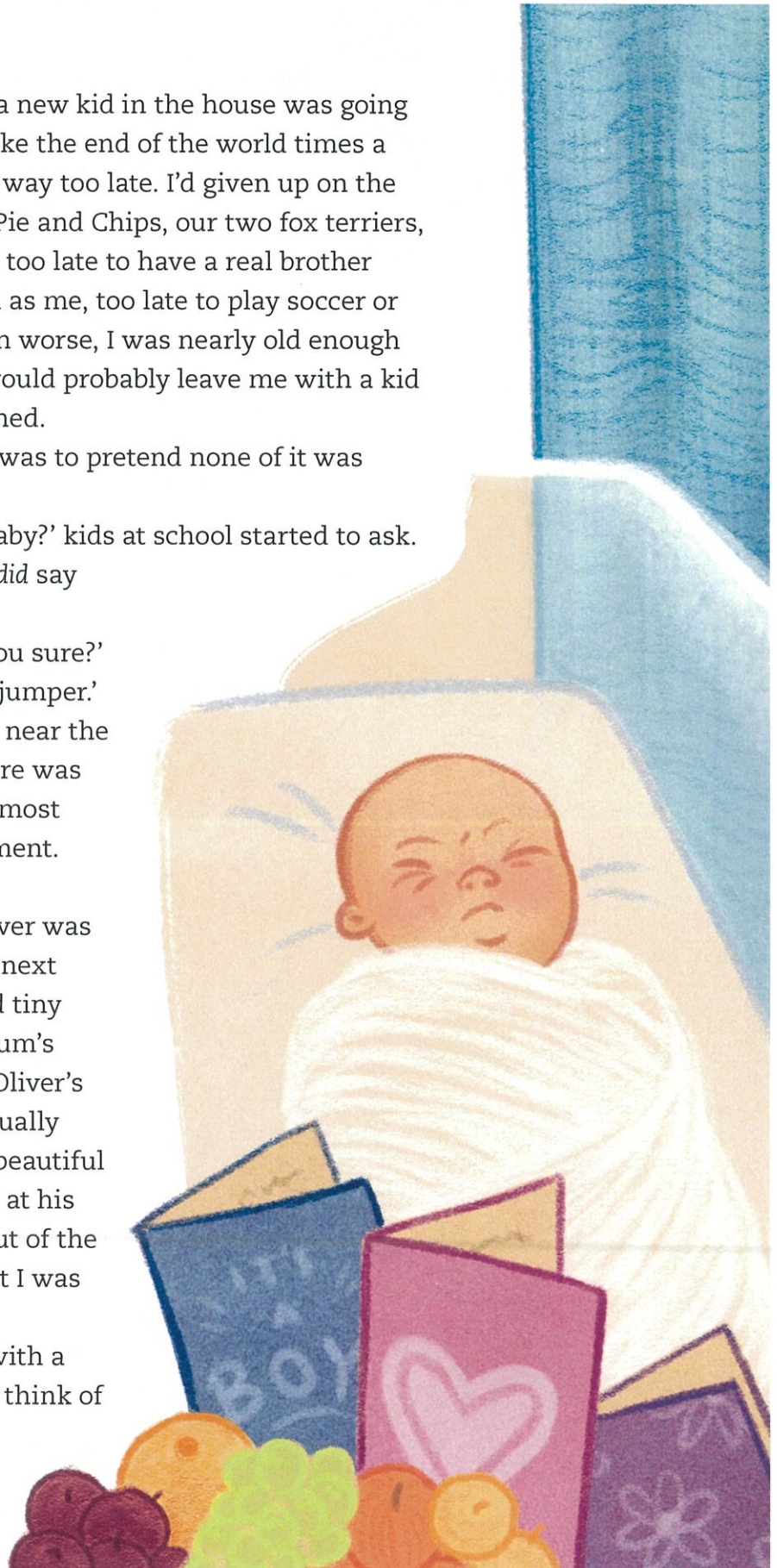
'She's just wearing a big jumper.'

Mum waddled so much, near the end; I had to tell people there was a baby coming after all. I almost shrivelled with embarrassment.

* * *

Then one day in spring, Oliver was born. I put a basket of fruit next to all the cards, flowers and tiny new baby clothes, sat on Mum's bed and looked down into Oliver's see-through crib. People usually say nice things about how beautiful new babies are but I looked at his squished red face poking out of the blankets and kept quiet. But I was glad it was a boy, at least.

'Well, Luke?' Mum said with a hopeful look. 'What do you think of your new brother?'





'Handsome little devil, isn't he?' said Dad.

'Um ... well, he's little,' I said.

'And ...?'

It was a good time to change the subject. 'When are babies supposed to start growing hair?'

Dad got me to sit down. He gently lifted Oliver out of his cot, nuzzled at him dreamily and then laid him in my arms. I looked down at him. I was beginning to think my brother might be almost cute when, screwing up his face and turning even redder than before, he gagged. Thick goo shot out of Oliver's mouth and splattered all over my school shirt. Gross!

'Oops!' said Mum. 'They do quite a lot of that on their first day. Wash it off in the sink, love.'

One of the nurses lent me a green surgeon's top. I had to take my school shirt home in a plastic bag. Having a too-late baby brother wasn't in the top ten cool events in my life, so far.

On the way home, all Dad did was blah, blah, blah about Oliver. He hadn't even bothered to ask me about my day or anything. I had a sad feeling in the bottom of my ribs. I didn't want Dad to go on about Oliver any more but he looked so happy, I couldn't tell him to stop.

* * *

The next day I tried out Oliver's stroller, just for fun. It had been mine when I was a baby. Mum and Dad had wrestled it out of the attic and cleaned it up the best they could a month before. It was parked in the hallway, waiting for Oliver to come home.

I only wanted to scoot the stroller down the hallway for a bit. But my bottom got wedged in too tightly. I tried to struggle my way out. There was a ripping sound and suddenly one of the sides had a giant tear. Now Oliver didn't have a stroller. I got into big trouble for that, even when I explained that it smelled mouldy.

'Come on, Luke, son, you've already exploded Oliver's bottle warmer with your volcano experiments, and broken the spring in his wind-up cot mobile,' said Dad. 'You're the big brother. You have to start acting like a grown-up.'

But I wasn't grown up. I was only eleven. Why did I have to act grown up? Had Oliver replaced me? I told myself it wasn't good to think like that. After all, kids in Year Five aren't meant to be jealous of tiny babies, are they?

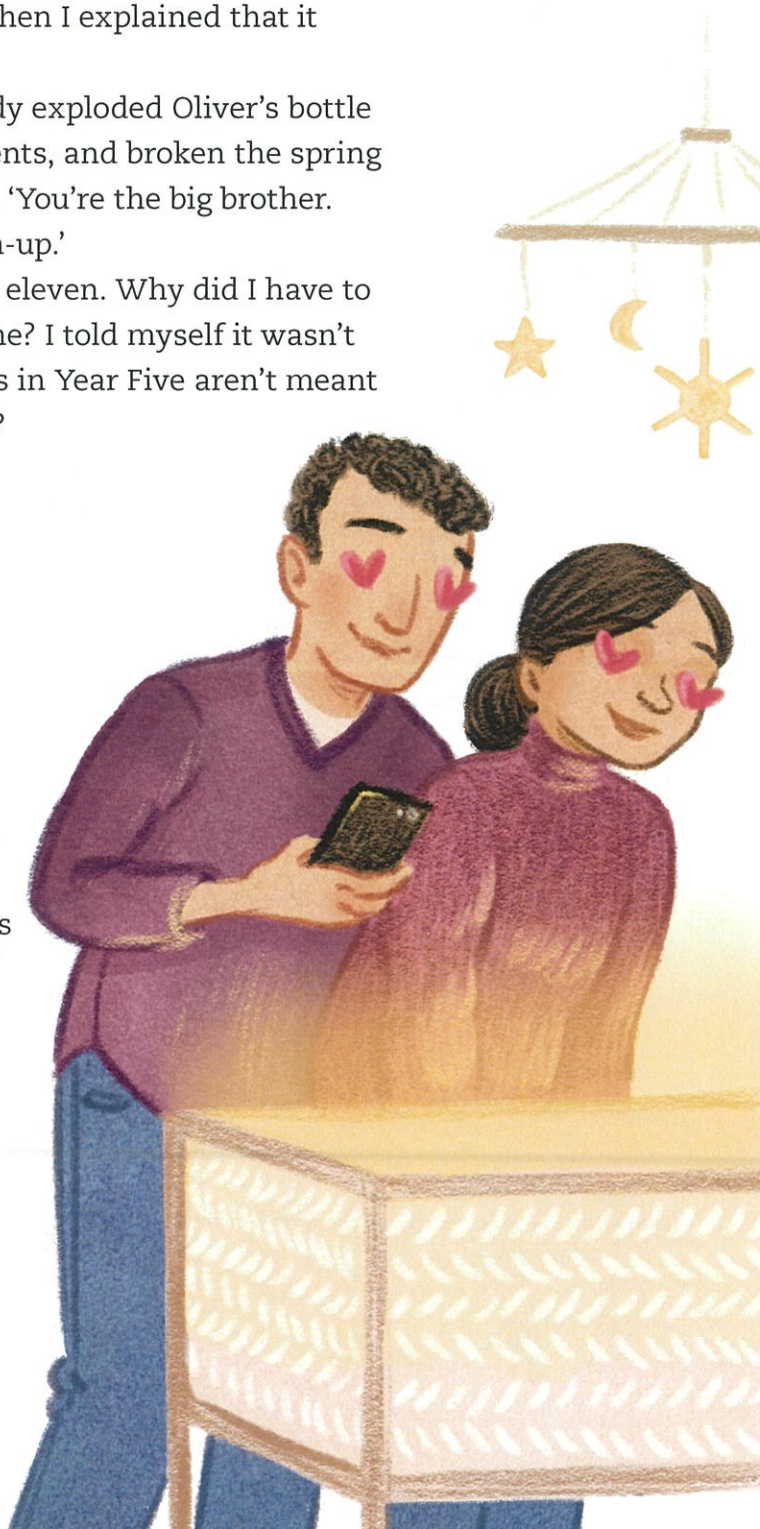
On the day Oliver came home, Mum and Dad made an endless video of him lying in his cot. He did absolutely nothing, except make a funny face while he filled his nappy.

'Come and be in it, Luke,' Mum said.

'Sorry, too busy. I've got to go and feed my fish,' I replied.

For the first few months of Oliver's life, there are no photos or videos of the both of us. Well, there was one photo where you can see a bit of my elbow. I was escaping from being in the shot. I don't think it counts. Mum and Dad were disappointed. I just didn't do photos back then.

Then, one middle-of-the night, when Oliver was four months old, Dad shook me awake.



'Sorry mate, you'll have to come with us. We're taking the little bloke to hospital. There's trouble with his breathing.'

'Huh? Okay.'

I rubbed my face to wake up and stumbled out of bed with my eyes half open.

You can become fully awake quickly when you're scared, and it didn't take a doctor or nurse to see that Oliver was severely sick. The skin all around his pink lips was greyish. His chest sucked in way too far when he breathed. His arms and legs flopped as if they belonged to a doll.

Mum and Dad looked frightened and pale. 'Should we call an ambulance?' I said.

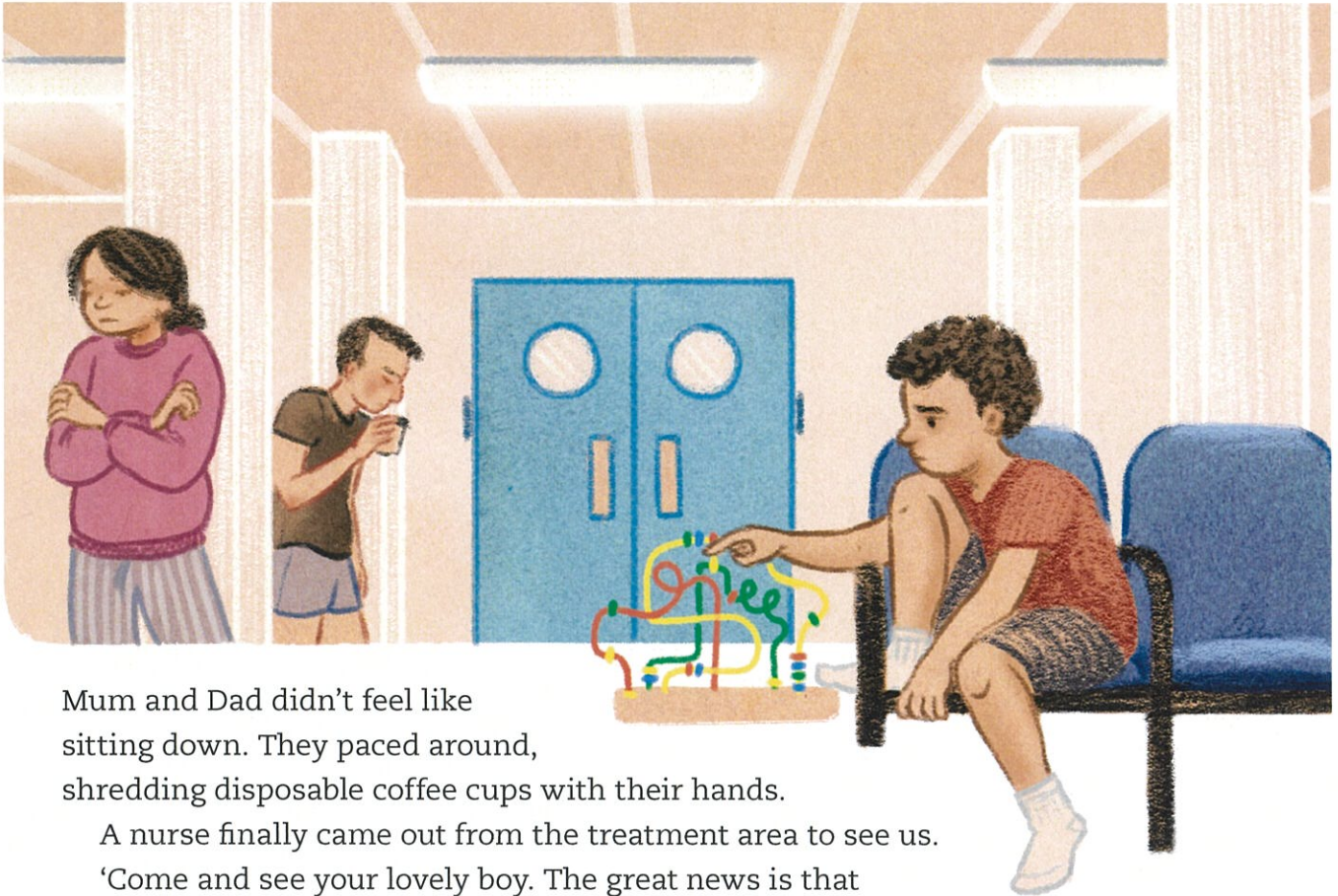
Mum rocked Oliver with desperate arms. 'Hospital's so close it'll be quicker to run up there now ourselves.'

We ran through the doors of the emergency department of the kid's hospital. The nurse behind the desk took one look at Oliver. Her eyes went wide. She picked up the phone. Then she sent us through to the treatment area in about three seconds flat. We didn't have to wait like everyone else.

Doctors, nurses, trolleys and machines came from every direction, all for Oliver. They surrounded him like a swarm of bees. In the middle of all the chaos, a doctor said Oliver would be okay, but that he needed help right away. 'Intensive treatment,' I think she called it, but I knew what she meant.

We had to go out into the waiting room. It was only for about fifteen minutes but it seemed like hours.





Mum and Dad didn't feel like sitting down. They paced around, shredding disposable coffee cups with their hands.

A nurse finally came out from the treatment area to see us. 'Come and see your lovely boy. The great news is that Oliver's condition isn't as bad as we feared. The oxygen improved his colour very quickly. The doctor will tell you more, but for now he'll have to be admitted to the ward. Stay as long as you like.' We followed the nurse. Mum and Dad cried relieved tears. And me? I had to wipe away something that must have gone in my eye.

They'd set up a bag of liquid to drip into Oliver's pudgy arm. Oxygen tubes were stuck up his nostrils. Oliver was nice and pink now, but his breathing still looked like it was a struggle. I sucked air into my lungs with each of his breaths, wishing I could do it for him.

'It's pneumonia,' the doctor told us, 'an infection in the lungs. It's fairly common and nothing we can't fix. Oliver will soon be back to his old self.' She winked at me. 'He'll be able to play soccer with you in no time at all.'

At four months old? I didn't think so.

I looked at Oliver's face and stroked his tiny curled fingers.



It wasn't too late to love my too-late baby brother.

In a thermos flask, Dad brought some of his home-made chicken soup for Mum. He brought in her suitcase, her knitting and some magazines too. Mum had a recliner chair set up next to Oliver's cot. It was for sitting in during the day, and sleeping near my brother at night. In a way, she was lucky to get to stay. Dad and I would only go home and worry until we could visit Oliver again, even though Mum said she'd phone if there were any problems.

Babies can go from badly ill to complete recovery quicker than you'd ever believe. After three days, Oliver was healthy apart from a little cough. The doctors said he was okay

to go home. He'd still need medicine, but Mum or Dad could easily squirt it into his mouth with a syringe themselves.

On the day Oliver came home, I took a bag with me to the hospital. Inside were the going home clothes I'd chosen for him: some very tiny jeans, a t-shirt with a robot on the front and a baseball cap to hide his bald bits.

Mum dressed Oliver then Dad snuggled him into his shiny brand new stroller. It was a sunny day and so we were turning Oliver's discharge from hospital into a celebration with a family walk home.

As I wheeled Oliver off the ward, I heard Dad's phone go BOING! That's the sound it makes when there's a message. He stopped to check it, which gave me a really cool idea.

'Please, Dad, why don't you take a video of us on your phone?' I said. 'Just me and my Ollie.' ■

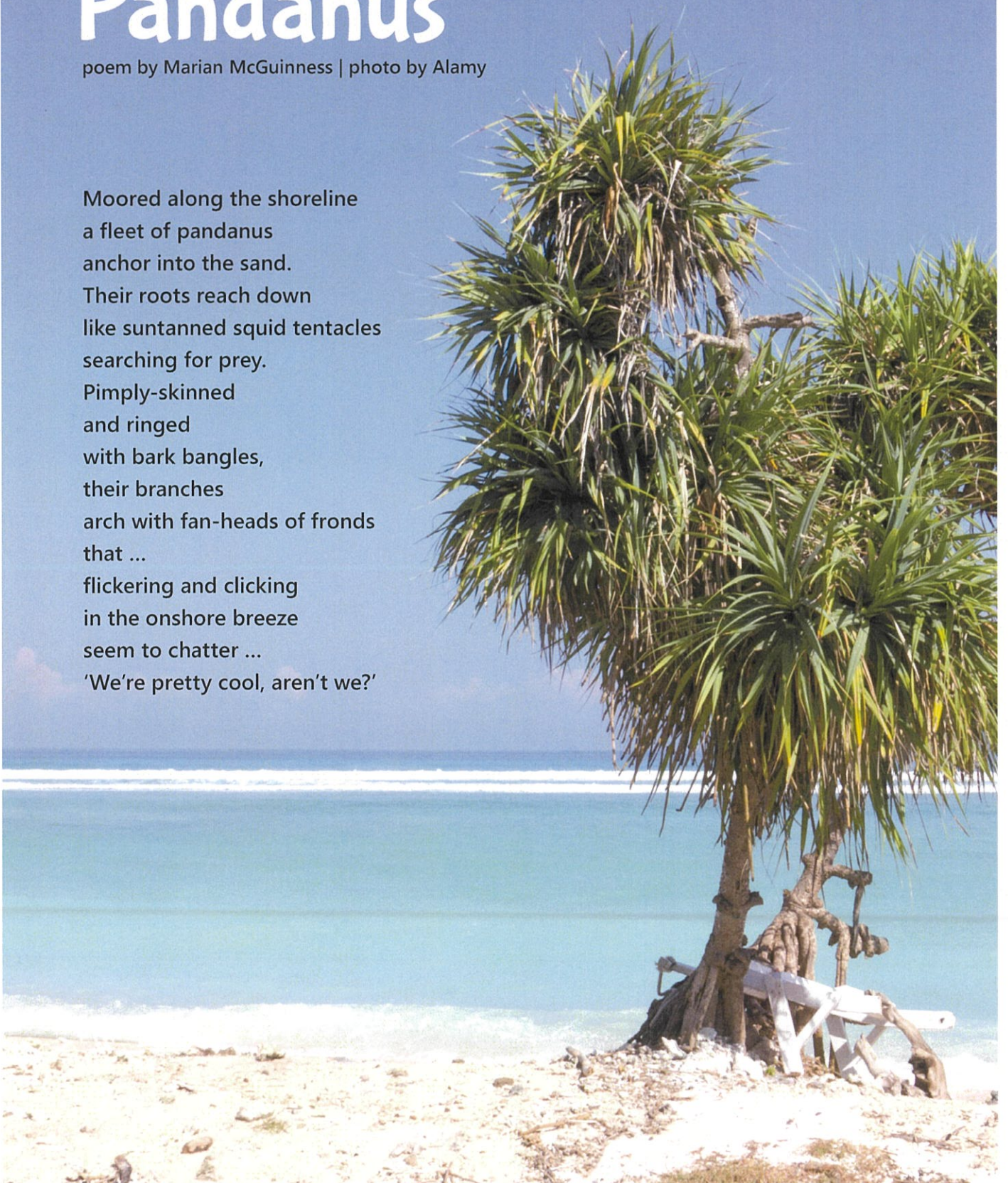
Siblings
are the
best; always
remember
that!



Pandanus

poem by Marian McGuinness | photo by Alamy

Moored along the shoreline
a fleet of pandanus
anchor into the sand.
Their roots reach down
like suntanned squid tentacles
searching for prey.
Pimpley-skinned
and ringed
with bark bangles,
their branches
arch with fan-heads of fronds
that ...
flickering and clicking
in the onshore breeze
seem to chatter ...
'We're pretty cool, aren't we?'



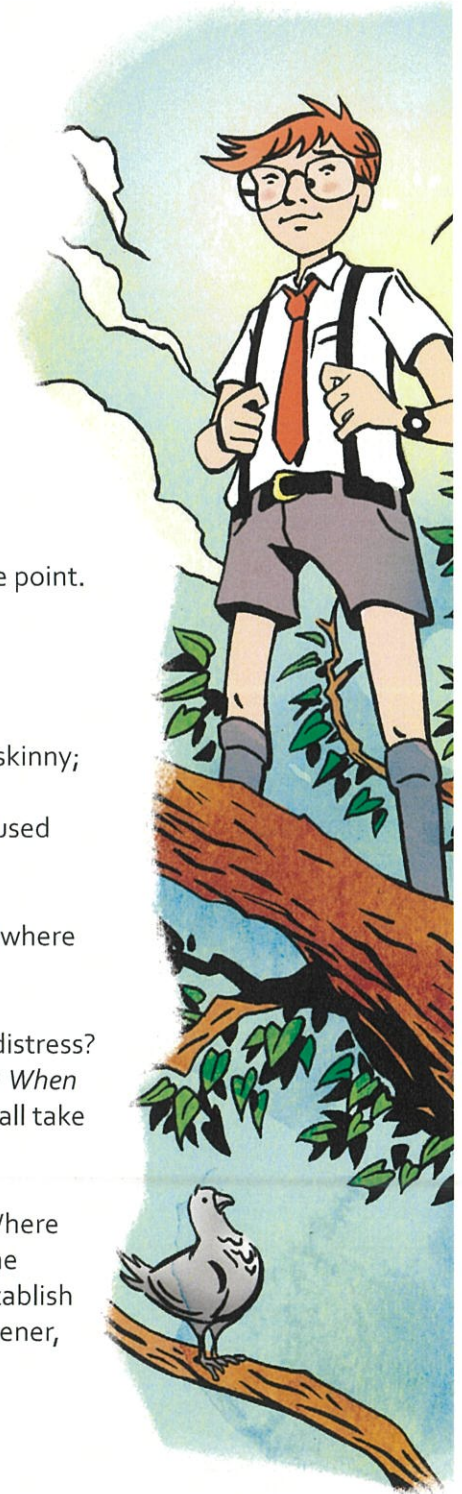
Fact and Fiction

play by Jessica Fallico | illustrated by Craig Phillips

Characters

PRINCIPAL FICTION
MR FACT

- PRINCIPAL FICTION Ah, Mr Fact—so nice to see you.
MR FACT Hello Principal Fiction. How are you?
PRINCIPAL FICTION Enough with the small talk—get to the point. What’s the story?
MR FACT The story, sir?
PRINCIPAL FICTION I want the long and short of it.
MR FACT Well ... the story ...
PRINCIPAL FICTION Give me the story! The lowdown; the skinny; the good oil, the *information*—what’s happened in the playground that’s caused this ruckus?
MR FACT Sir?
PRINCIPAL FICTION I want the who, what, why, when and where of it!
MR FACT Pardon?
PRINCIPAL FICTION *Who* should I blame for the teachers’ distress? *What* went down? *Why* did it happen? *When* exactly did it all start and *where* did it all take place?
MR FACT Where should I begin?
PRINCIPAL FICTION At the beginning, you nincompoop! Where else? You need to begin the story at the beginning, set it up, introduce and establish the characters, so that I, being the listener, know what I’m in for.
MR FACT Okay. Well it all started ...





PRINCIPAL FICTION And after you've established the beginning, you must proceed to the middle. This is the point where you should tell me the complications, the problems between characters, obstacles they face, the catalyst for what's to come next!

MR FACT Uh-huh. Well, it all started yesterday at recess when Hamish MacAbee decided ...

PRINCIPAL FICTION Hold it. Hamish who?

MR FACT Hamish MacAbee, sir.

PRINCIPAL FICTION Here's your first pitfall; you must establish the character precisely. This Hamish boy—is he big or small? Does he have a crooked nose, greasy hair, small hands, a dashing smile? Build the imagery so that I can be on the same page as you.

MR FACT Hamish MacAbee's the boy with the red hair and freckles; he wears high shorts and braces; he's the loveliest of boys—always with a great big smile each and every day.

PRINCIPAL FICTION Good, excellent, now I have a concept of his character and you can build from there.

MR FACT Well, yesterday at recess, Hamish decided to tell everyone he could fly. You see, Hamish is a very imaginative boy, and he thought that if he climbed the great willow tree near the front gate to the highest branch, he'd be able to jump off and soar like a bird through the sky. And he was absolutely certain he could do it.

PRINCIPAL FICTION Oh my, this *is* a good story—

MR FACT So the word spread like wildfire around the school playground that at lunchtime today Hamish MacAbee was going to fly! But Billy Stone, the school bully—the blond boy with dark eyes, an upturned nose and clenched fists—we've had a lot of trouble with him.

PRINCIPAL FICTION Oh yes, him—unpleasant boy.

MR FACT He didn't believe Hamish for a second. He walked right up to Hamish and said, 'If you can ...'

PRINCIPAL FICTION Hold on. Character voice, please. I need you to capture the tone, the pitch, the timbre of his voice for me to understand the situation. Go ahead.

MR FACT He said ... (*imitating Billy's voice*) 'If you can jump from the highest branch of the old willow tree and fly, then I'm a monkey's uncle.'

PRINCIPAL FICTION Ooohhh! What happened then?

MR FACT

So it was all set ... at the beginning of lunch today, Hamish MacAbee was going to jump off of the highest branch and attempt to fly.

PRINCIPAL FICTION

Oh I do love a story with a good climax! Wait, *how* was this possible? Where were all the teachers? Why was there no-one on duty?

MR FACT

They were at a staff development meeting at the beginning of lunch.

PRINCIPAL FICTION

Who authorised a staff development meeting?

MR FACT

You did, Principal Fiction.

PRINCIPAL FICTION

Ah, incidental details, Mr Fact. Irrelevant. Continue with the story; don't leave me in suspense!

MR FACT

Well, Hamish MacAbee climbed the tree, limb by limb, to the highest branch he could stand on. Just as the teachers came out of the staffroom, we saw the swarm of children and followed their gazes to see Hamish at the top, at least eight metres off the ground. His little feet teetered over the edge, he took a puff of his inhaler and, before we could do anything, he leapt!

PRINCIPAL FICTION

And? The boy must be hurt?

Are the parents outraged?

MR FACT

No, sir.

PRINCIPAL FICTION

Are we being sued?

MR FACT

No, sir.

PRINCIPAL FICTION

Are the police here?

MR FACT

No, sir.

PRINCIPAL FICTION

Well? What then?

MR FACT

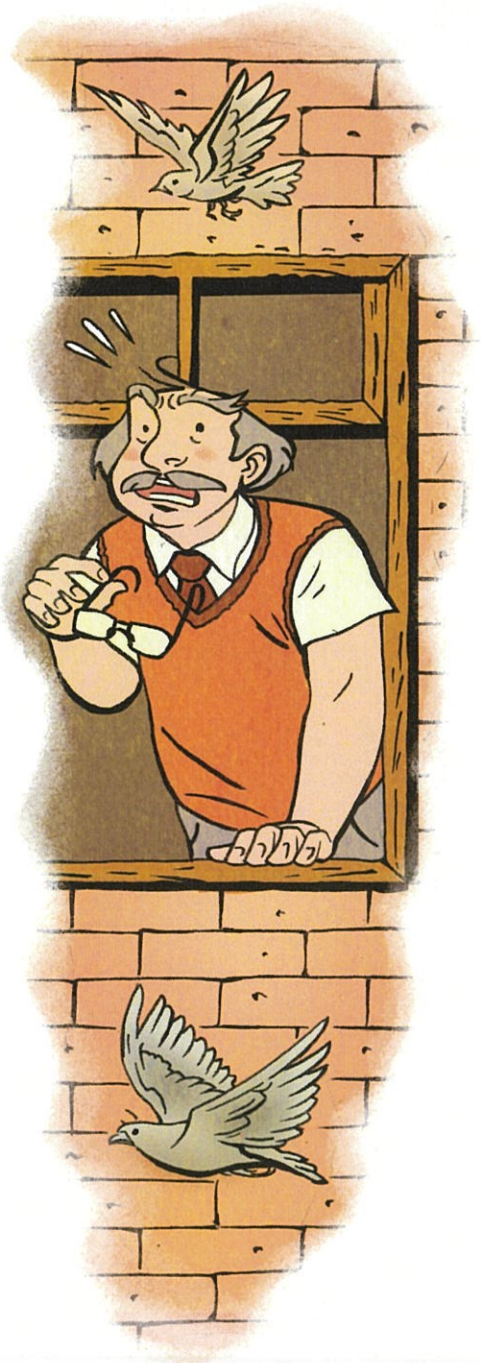
He flew, sir.

PRINCIPAL FICTION

He flew?

MR FACT

He flew.



PRINCIPAL FICTION Hogwash! Little boys can't fly. You've got your facts wrong, Mr Fact. The end should come to a lovely close, of what should be problems resolved, lessons learnt! Not this nonsense.

MR FACT But there *is* a lesson learnt. Perhaps if you believe in something, you can absolutely do it! It's unbelievable, I know, but that's what's caused the ruckus. Hamish MacAbee actually leapt off the branch and flew! He's still doing it—he's out there gliding through the air like a bird. It's spectacular!

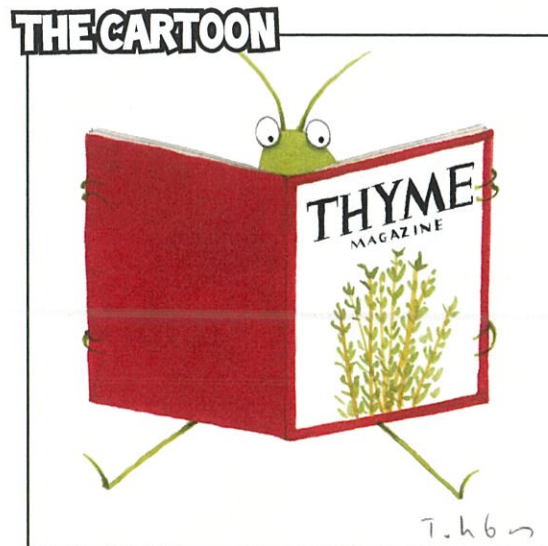
PRINCIPAL FICTION Fact—you've just crossed Fiction with this little tall tale.

MR FACT If you don't believe me, look, Principal Fiction!
 (PRINCIPAL FICTION *goes to the window and sees Hamish MacAbee flying.*)

PRINCIPAL FICTION In fact, it is fact, Fact!
 (PRINCIPAL FICTION *goes woozy and faints.*)

MR FACT Yes, sir. Fact trumps Fiction!
 (MR FACT *exits.*)

THE END

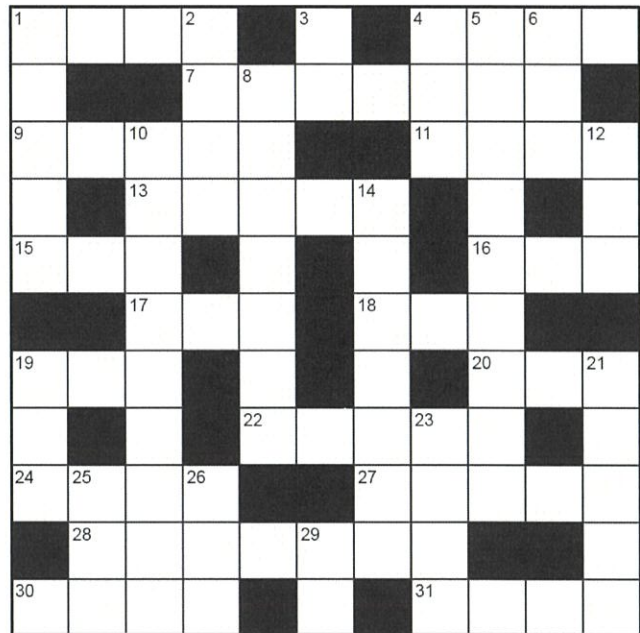


by Toby Riddle

CROSSWORD 6

Across

1. Winter weather is like this.
4. An ancient Egyptian goddess (who looks as if she *is* twice).
7. To make someone separate and alone.
9. Something of value.
11. You hammer this.
13. The noise a duck makes.
15. A girl's name (short for *Prudence*).
16. Past tense of *light*.
17. A Muslim boy's name.
18. French for *here*.
19. You might wear this on your head.
20. Stoves mostly cook with electricity or this.
22. A nick.
24. These are on the ends of feet.
27. Milk is drunk; ice cream is _____.
28. People you like.
30. Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (initials).
31. Very small.



Solution next month!

Down

1. A pain in the muscle.
2. French for *god*.
3. Short for *company*.
4. Scottish boy's name.
5. Captain _____ was a famous bushranger.
6. International Engineering Inventors (initials).
8. Where a train stops.
10. People who move into an empty house without the owner's permission.
12. A large amount.
14. Woollen things are _____.
19. Opposite of 1 Across.
21. Summer days are often like this.
23. If you break a bone, you might have to wear a plaster _____.
25. Office of Friendly Subalterns (initials).
26. A knight's title.
29. Short for 'number' (comes from Italian *numero*).

SOLUTIONS

Crossword 5

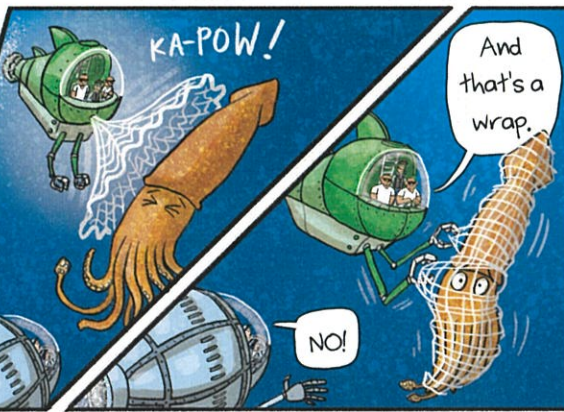
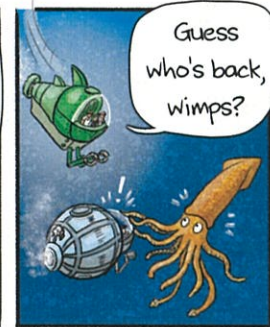
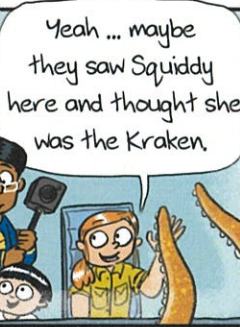
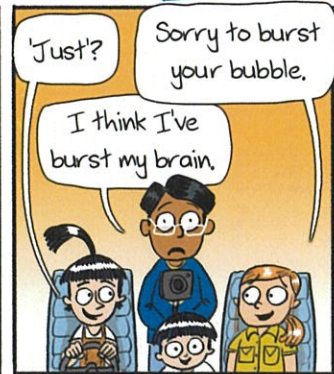
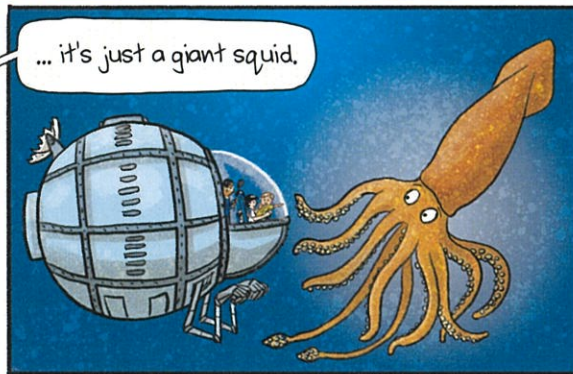
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E	S	A	U	R	N				
D	R	E	A	M	E	R	L	O	G

Mr Erasmus's Slimetacular
Puzzler (from page 15)

YOU SNAILED IT!



Next: A monster surprise.



It's a scuffle, a skirmish, a scrimmage for a squid! Who will win this underwater tug of war? Find out next issue.