

Smash Hit

BY JO RANDERSON



SCENE: School camp. The last night. The students are being briefed about the concert.

MS HONG. Right, tamariki. So, you all know about the concert tonight.

I want you to write a skit – a smash hit.

ANIKA. A what?

MS HONG. A skit. It's like a short play.

NIKO. No way! We're not Shakespeare.

PAULA. Who's Shakespeare?

MAGNUS. He's one of Beyoncé's back-up dancers. He moves like this.

He does a great dance move.

PAULA (to ANIKA). Did she say we have to write our own skits?

MS HONG. She did. In groups. Whakarongo mai. I want your skit to be dynamic. I want it to be grounded in reality – but also fantastical. Or possibly mythical. It needs to be slow in places, fast in places, and work towards a climactic ending. The drama needs to be high stakes, but keep it real!

ANIKA. Whaaah ...?

MS HONG. You have ten minutes.

PAULA. Whaaah ...?

MS HONG. Surprise me. Surprise everyone – but be yourselves. Try using colloquial language, but don't forget metaphor ... onomatopoeia ... alliteration! You'll be fine. Relax. You have ten whole minutes. Go!

She leaves.

ANIKA. What the heck?

Ms HONG pops back in.

MS HONG. I'm so excited to see what you come up with.

She gives a friendly wave and leaves.

PAULA. I've never written a skit.

MAGNUS. I hate writing. And what even is "oh no matto payer"?

ANIKA. It's when words sound like themselves. Like crash. You say crash, and it also sounds like a crash.

MAGNUS. Nah, a crash sounds like this.

He pushes over a chair.

PAULA. How do you spell that?

NIKO. Don't worry about spelling – we only have ten minutes to write a great skit with an even better ending.

MAGNUS. Everyone should die. That's always a good ending.

NIKO. That's too over the top. Ms Hong said keep it real. No one dies.

ANIKA. What about someone lets someone else down. *Deeply.* Like they *really disappoint* that person.

PAULA. That's lame.

MAGNUS. I know, I know! There's a dog. It rolls in a dead possum and smells so bad everyone dies.

NIKO. No!

MAGNUS. I'll be the dog.

He pretends to roll in road kill. The others start groaning and collapsing from the terrible smell.



ANIKA. Arrggh! That's the worst smell ever!

PAULA. I'm dying!

NIKO. I said nobody dies. Anyway, that's childish. Let's do something complex, with high stakes.

ANIKA. OK. How about this? There's a bio-tech engineer. She's developing an eco-sustainable product that stops kauri die-back but doesn't harm native species.

PAULA. What are the high stakes?

ANIKA. Excuse me! The high stakes are that unless she makes a scientific breakthrough, all the kauri trees will die.

MAGNUS. The high stakes are if she doesn't invent the product in time, a big dog will roll in dead possums and everyone will die.

NIKO. There will be no big dog and no road kill in our skit! There will, however, be aliens.

ANIKA. I think it should be *emotional* ... about people's emotions.

PAULA. Yeah, like there's this girl. She's always wanted to see where her grandfather was born, but his village was bombed in the war. So she does this big speech about ... you know ... life. The generations being connected like ... umm ... a tree. A family tree! (*She sways like a tree in the breeze.*) And leaves falling off the tree are a metaphor for time passing. And the girl cries.

She cries. There's an awkward silence.

NIKO. Yeah, maybe. Or what about there's this alien with ninety-eight legs.

ANIKA and MAGNUS *try to be an alien with ninety-eight legs.*

NIKO. Our alien plans to take over another planet because the aliens there only have eighty-six legs. But there's an accident in the spaceship and –

MAGNUS (*interrupting*). This big dog comes in, and it stinks of dead possum, and everyone dies!

NIKO (*to MAGNUS*). Why does everybody always have to die in your skits?

ANIKA. That's what happens in Shakespeare's plays, and he's good. Apparently.



MAGNUS. Shakespeare! He's the best!

He repeats the dance move from earlier but does it even better.

NIKO. Listen, there is not going to be a big dog in our play, and that's final!

MS HONG comes back in.

MS HONG. One minute to go. I can't wait. I am so excited. This is going to be great.

She leaves again. The students panic.

NIKO. One minute? Has that been nine minutes already?

ANIKA. We haven't even got an idea yet!

MAGNUS. Yes, we have – the big dog and road kill.

PAULA. No, it's about a girl trying to understand her grandfather.

NIKO. No way! It's about aliens – definitely the most high-stakes idea, and it has the best climax.

ANIKA. I think a skit about a bio-tech engineer is better.

MS HONG comes back in.

MS HONG. Great work, people. Let's see what you've done.

She sits down. The students look at each other nervously.

ANIKA (stepping forward and making a grand gesture). Ko Bryony Manaaki ahau. I am a leading bio-tech engineer. This is my assistant (gesturing to **MAGNUS**), Rufus.

MAGNUS. Woof! I'm a dog by the way.

ANIKA. Yes, this is my dog assistant, Rufus. The dog. Dogs are actually very helpful to scientists, you know.

MAGNUS (agreeing). Woof, woof.

ANIKA. I'm very intelligent. I have invented a secret serum that will save kauri trees. They're dying from a mysterious and terrible disease.

PAULA (starts swaying). Ahh, the trees. The mighty kauri trees.

They remind me of my grandfather.

ANIKA. Almighty tree, can I save you? I am a leading bio-tech engineer.

MAGNUS. No, it is too late ... the tree is dying!

NIKO (to **MAGNUS**, irritated). The tree can't die. I don't want any dying.

MAGNUS (to **NIKO**). We need dying for the high stakes.

ANIKA (reassuring **NIKO**). The tree isn't dying. It is just deeply disappointed.

PAULA. The leaves flutter to the ground ... it is a message from my grandfather. (calling) Grandfather! Time passes, but we will always be connected.

ANIKA and NIKO gather round

PAULA and shimmy their hands as if they are leaves dropping to the ground. **MAGNUS** pretends to be a dog.

MAGNUS. Woof! Woof! Woof!



NIKO (*cupping a hand round his ear*). I have just received a message from the aliens with eighty-six legs. They said please could they sign a peace treaty – and also, please bring the play to a climactic end!

The students all take a dramatic pose and speak more loudly.

ANIKA. Don't worry, kauri. I will save you!

NIKO. It is time to write a treaty and head back to my home planet!

PAULA. Grandfather. They shouldn't have judged you because you have eighty-six legs! I wish there was no more war!

MAGNUS *runs around the room and rolls several times.*

NIKO. Pooh, what's that terrible smell?

PAULA. Worst ever! The smell of sixteen dead possums. I'm dying.

She falls to the floor. NIKO and ANIKA remain standing.

NIKO (*stubbornly*). I'm not dying. I have no sense of smell.

ANIKA. I'm not dying either. However, I am very, very disappointed.

MS HONG (*leaping up, clapping*). Tino pai, tamariki mā! That was excellent.

But one thing – where was the onomatopoeia?

The students look at each other. MAGNUS picks up a chair and drops it.

Loud music plays. He leads a dance, based on his earlier moves.

The students finish in a pose as the music ends.

MS HONG (*clapping*). Brilliant. The perfect skit.

ANIKA. Yeah, better than Shakespeare.

THE END



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Smash Hit

by Jo Randerson

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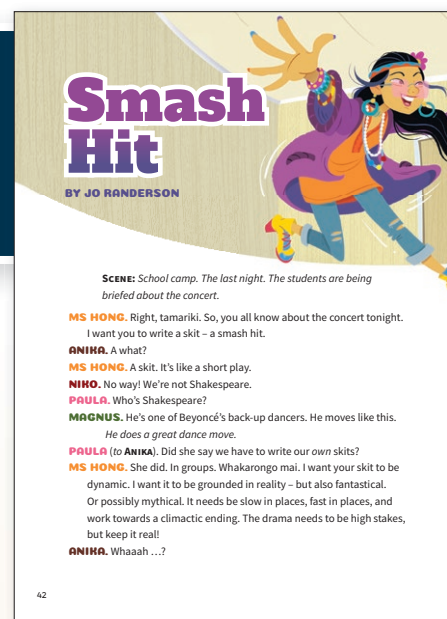
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