

SCHOOL JOURNAL

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The New Zealand
Curriculum

LEVEL

4



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HOW TO HAIL



by Whiti Hereaka

The rec centre's packed. It's like one big party, but Maia's determined not to enjoy herself. Coming to see Auntie Emz's derby game had been Mum's idea. They needed a break from unpacking, *apparently* – although Maia's pretty sure of the real reason: they needed a break from each other.

Supporters are dressed in team colours and costumes to back their favourite derby player. One girl holds up a sign: "Whaea Ball!" It's Auntie Emz's derby name. She has fans! The sign makes Maia proud, but she's careful not to let on.

"You couldn't go to something like this at home," Mum says, noticing the look on Maia's face.


Not so careful after all, but Maia doesn't reply. She's decided they're still not talking. Besides, the game's about to begin.

They understand the basics. Each team has four blockers and a jammer. The jammer scores points by pushing past the other team's blockers. Auntie Emz is a jammer, which is no surprise. She's always been staunch and fearless – two of the things Maia likes best about her.

The blockers live up to their name, using their hips and shoulders to stop the other team's jammer. Maia can't believe how fast they skate. Ada Love Hate – the opposition's jammer – is taken down, and Auntie Emz speeds past on the outside to take the lead. She doesn't slow down as she laps the pack a second time. Ada Love Hate is barely back on her feet before Auntie Emz puts her hands on her hips, calling off the jam and taking the points. Her fans cheer. Even Mum's on her feet. "She's on fire, eh, Maia?"

"Duh," Maia says.





The argument had kicked off in a stupid way – over nail polish. They’d been unpacking, and Maia was tired. The night before, she’d slept on the floor, badly. Actually, she hadn’t slept well ever since Mum announced they were moving. Sometimes Maia felt as if her heart was beating faster and faster. They weren’t panic attacks exactly, but it was definitely a weird, unpleasant feeling. That morning, she’d finally managed to clear a bit of space in her new room to set up her laptop, but there was no wi-fi.

“It’s not connected yet,” Mum said. “Your father was going to sort that.” Mum was about to return to the boxes in the lounge when she noticed Maia’s expression. “Look, sweetheart, once we’re sorted, it’s going to be great here – I know it.” Her mother kept burbling while Maia picked at her nail polish and zoned out. She’d been given the hard sell about the move lots of times. The main problem hadn’t changed: her parents didn’t care what Maia thought. It was a done deal.

She’d painted her nails at Ro’s slumber party. They all had. Now only ten scruffy patches remained. Maia wondered if Ro’s looked the same – or maybe she’d used remover and started again.

“Look in the box in the bathroom and find the proper stuff to take it off,” Mum said. She was no longer sympathetic. Now she was irritated.

Maia scowled. Didn’t Mum understand that it wasn’t just nail polish? That the little purple patches were the last bits of home?

“Are you listening?” Mum asked.

Maia was, but she’d had it. “I *always* have to listen to you, but you never listen to me.”

Then, of course, once she started, Maia couldn’t stop. Everything came out: It was totally unfair. Just because Cait was at high school, she got to stay back with Dad. A move during term would be disruptive. Like it wasn’t for Maia! And what if Dad *never* found a job. What if Maia and Mum were stuck in Hamilton on their own *forever*?



Mum folded her arms and leant against the door frame. "It's hard for me too," she said.

Maia couldn't believe it. Her mother had the exciting new job. She was the reason they were moving. Hard for *her*? Seriously? She had no idea.

"I've left friends behind," Mum added.

"Like you had any," Maia shouted back.

It ended with both of them crying, a phone call to Dad. It was awful.

After the game, Maia and Mum find Aunty Emz. She's sweating – and her make-up has smudged – but she's on a total high.

"That was awesome," Maia says quietly when they hug.

"There's a junior team starting," Aunty Emz says. "You could join."

Mum just has to say something positive. "It'd be a good way to make friends."

"I already have friends."

"Well," says Aunty Emz in a voice that's far too cheery. "You can never have too many."

"Whatever. Anyway, I can't skate."

Aunty Emz smiles. "That's not a problem."

The next day, there's a knock at the door. Maia edges past the stacked boxes in the hall to answer it.


It's Aunty Emz. "Hey, kid. Want to come training?"

Maia shrugs. It's a chance to get out of the house.

They borrow gear from the rec centre. The skody kneepads and elbow pads and wrist guards gross her out, but luckily Aunty Emz has a spare helmet.

Maia tiptoes awkwardly on her stoppers over to the rink. She's not happy. What if she hurts herself? What if people laugh?





“You’ve got to let go, Maia,” Aunty Emz says. “You can’t have fun standing still.” So Maia lets go of the barrier and rolls towards her aunt. She feels so unsteady. She’s going to fall backwards. Automatically, her arms start making little circles. “Bend your knees and drop your hands on them.”

Maia does what she’s told, and it works. She regains her balance.

“Always do that when you’re out of control,” Aunty Emz says.

“What if I fall?”

“Then you’ll get back up. Anyway, I can teach you how to fall.”

Maia’s pretty sure she knows how to do that already, but Aunty Emz insists on a lesson.

“Fall to your knees first,” she says, demonstrating. “Then slide your arms out in front. Don’t forget to use your wrist guards – otherwise you’ll get hurt.”

Aunty Emz peers up from her sprawled position. She looks like a big X. “Now you try.”

So Maia drops to her knees and slides her arms out in front. Now they are two big X’s lying on the ground. She turns her face towards her aunt, waiting for the next instruction.

“Good. Right ... how to get back up.” Aunty Emz kneels on one knee. “Push your weight through your bent leg, and the skate will stay still.” She puts both hands on her bent knee and pushes herself up to standing. Maia copies exactly.

“Excellent,” Aunty Emz says. “Now do it again.”

They fall over and over until it doesn’t seem so bad. Then Aunty Emz skates off, and Maia cautiously follows. Whenever she feels wobbly, she bends her knees and drops her hands. She pushes herself to skate faster and faster. Soon she’s flying around the rink. Maia feels better than she’s done in ages. It’s like that trick when you press the palms of your hands into either side of a door frame. All that tension builds up in your body until you finally step away, and your arms float, weightless.



Then gravity finds her. Maia loses control on a turn and falls to her knees. She slides her wrists out, just like she's practised. When she looks up, there's a line of faces watching: Aunt Emz's derby team. Worse, Maia sees Mum among them.

Where did she come from? Usually, if she'd messed up in front of this many people, Maia would be shamed. Now she feels triumphant. It's like she's been starved of oxygen for weeks and can finally breathe again. To cheers from the team, Maia plants her knee and pushes up.

She hopes Mum won't ruin the whole skating thing by talking about it. *See. I knew you'd find good things about being here, sweetheart.* Thankfully, Mum's quiet in the car. It's a comfortable silence, not like the one over the last few days.

Maia picks at her nail polish. Now there's only a few specks left. Maybe she'll call Ro when she gets home.

illustrations by Rebecca ter Borg

THE FIGHT TO VOTE

— by Susan Paris —

It's hard to imagine a world where women can't vote. Yet up until 1893, this was the reality. Not one country allowed women to have a say in their national government. In some parts of the world, it would stay that way for a long time. New Zealand was different. On 28 November 1893, women went to the polling booth for the first time. It was a famous victory – a radical change – but it didn't come without a fight.

— Women's Rights —

In early colonial New Zealand, women had few rights. Most worked at home, looking after their families, and left politics to men. In the 1860s, however, women began to speak out. They wanted equal rights in marriage, education, and employment. Most importantly, they wanted to help shape society. They wanted to vote.

Women in New Zealand weren't acting alone. They were influenced by feminists in Europe and Britain, who were also demanding legal equality and social justice – to stand as equal citizens alongside men. Mary Ann Muller, from Blenheim, followed what was happening in the women's movement overseas and became very outspoken about women's rights. Using the pen-name Femina (because many people disapproved of her views), Muller published articles in the local newspaper. These articles were controversial but widely read. So was Muller's pamphlet *An Appeal to the Men of New Zealand*. "How long are women to remain a wholly unrepresented body of the people?" she asked, the first woman in New Zealand to speak out in such a public way.





Why the First?

Why were New Zealand women the first in the world to have suffrage (the right to vote)? Some historians think it was because the settler experience taught them to be independent and capable. Women often worked alongside their husbands to establish farms and homes. Together, they were building the new colony of New Zealand. A lot of women felt they had earned the right to equality, and perhaps enough men came to share this opinion, too.

For many Pākehā settlers, New Zealand was also seen as a “new” country with the chance to make its own rules. Most immigrants had come from Britain, where there were lots of fixed ideas about social class and status. New Zealand could be different. People could make their own way in the world, whatever their backgrounds. These were democratic attitudes, and it makes sense that this kind of society would be sympathetic to the rights of women.

—The WCTU—

In 1885, there was an important development for women’s suffrage in New Zealand: the visit of Mary Clement Leavitt from the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Leavitt had come from the United States to campaign against alcohol – the “natural enemy” of the home. Those who heard her speak tended to agree. At the time, drunken violence was a problem in New Zealand. So was men spending their wages on drink instead of food for their family. If women had the vote, Leavitt argued, they could choose politicians who would clean up society. By the following year, fifteen local branches of the WCTU had sprung up, and members began to campaign for temperance and suffrage.



Kate Sheppard

Kate Sheppard was a founding member of the New Zealand WCTU. In 1887, she became the leader of its suffrage department. Sheppard believed in the prohibition of alcohol, but she also disliked the fact that women were so powerless. “We are tired of having a ‘sphere’ doled out to us,” she said, “and of being told that anything outside that sphere is ‘unwomanly.’”

Sheppard moved to New Zealand from England as a young woman. She married in 1871 but had only one child. Sheppard’s small family gave her time to work for the suffrage movement. She was well educated and had many skills, including the ability to influence both politicians and the public. After women got the vote, Sheppard continued to campaign for women’s rights. She became the first president of the National Council of Women, which set out to be a kind of women’s parliament.

“Is it right that while the gambler, the drunkard, and even the wife-beater has a vote, earnest, educated, and refined women are denied it?”

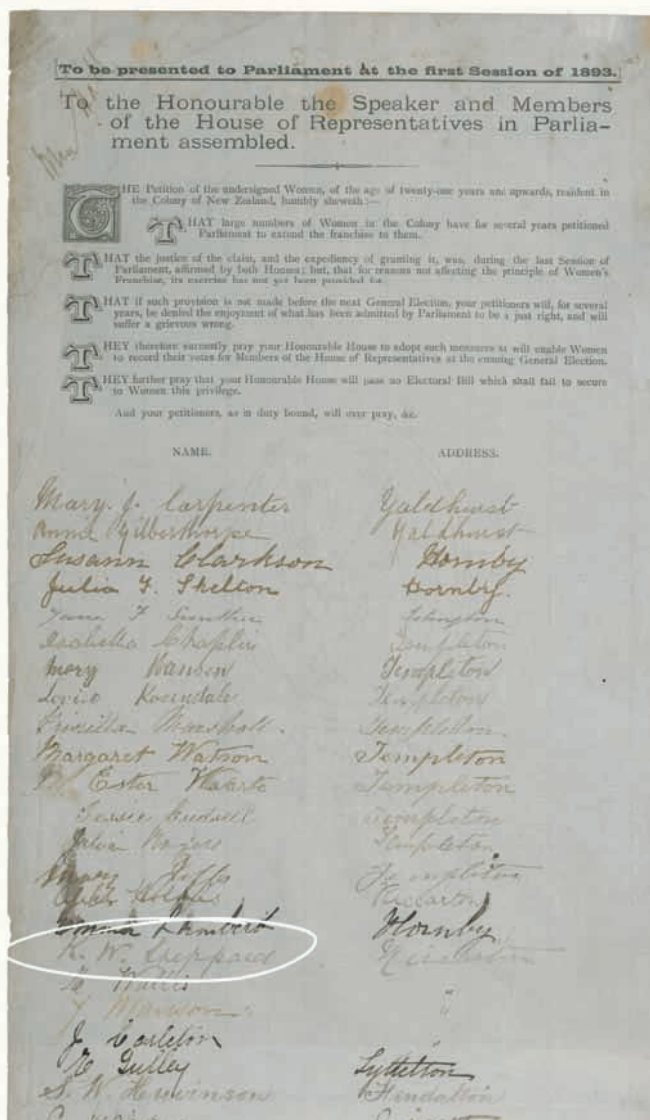
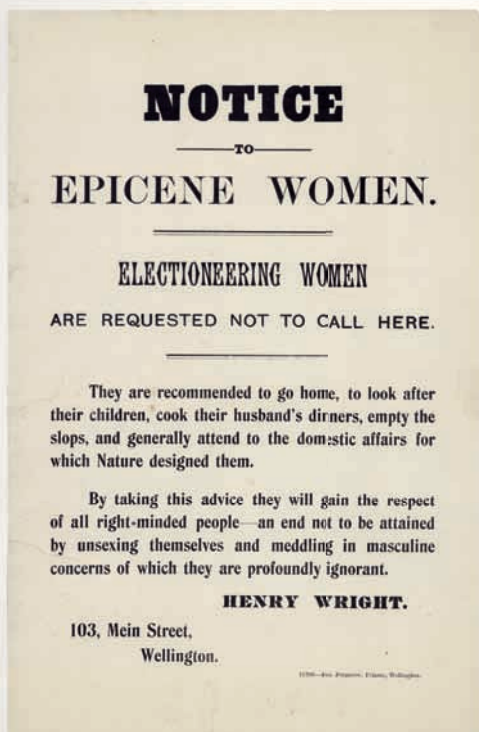
The Fight Heats Up

By the early 1890s, women's suffrage campaigners were active all over the country. Women from the WCTU and other organisations worked together to gain support for their cause. They wrote to newspapers and handed out leaflets. They bombarded politicians with letters and visits and organised public meetings and petitions. By far the largest petition was presented to parliament in July 1893. It was signed by almost 30,000 women – around a quarter of the adult female population at the time. Glued together, the petition was 270 metres long – and was presented to parliament in a wheelbarrow!

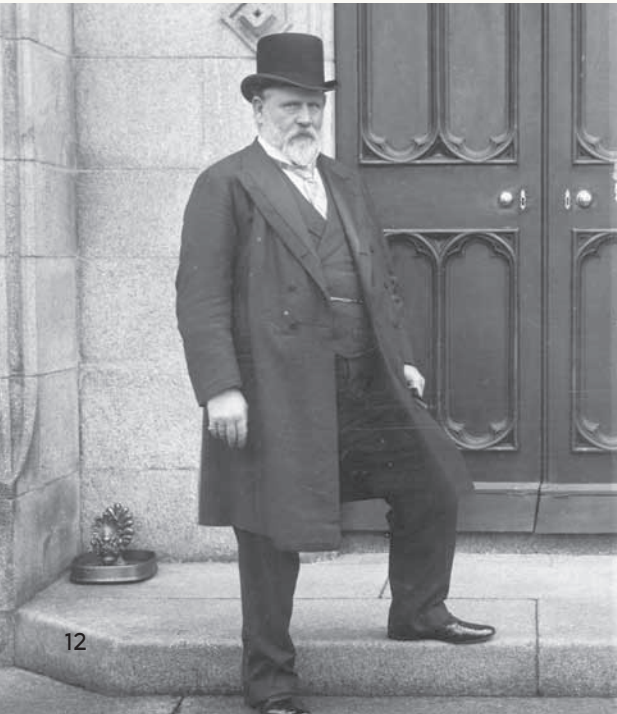
Men held a variety of opinions about women voting, but a growing number supported universal suffrage, including a few influential MPs. Over several years, they introduced bills to parliament, but these were always stopped by crafty opponents who made calculated changes so the bills would never become law. One of these changes proposed that women should also be allowed to become members of parliament, an idea that was certain to be hugely unpopular!

RIGHT: The July 1893 petition with a circle around Kate Sheppard's signature

BELOW: Propaganda from the opposition



Men who made a living from selling alcohol were also loudly against women's suffrage. They said that women voting wasn't natural; it would endanger family life. What they really meant was that female voters would endanger their businesses. The Prime Minister, Richard Seddon, was sympathetic to this concern. He'd once sold alcohol in his store on the West Coast. But Seddon had a bigger worry. His party, the Liberals, stood for the rights of workers and the poor. He feared that if wealthy women could vote, their husbands would convince them to vote for the opposition. Seddon also feared that poorer women, more likely to vote for his party, wouldn't bother. He could lose the next election. So Seddon worked to make sure that women would never get the vote. He assumed that other politicians would always back him.



— Victory —

Despite what Seddon wanted, after many months, an electoral bill finally got through. It was passed on 8 September 1893 by twenty votes to eighteen. Even then, opponents wouldn't give up. They asked New Zealand's governor, Lord Glasgow, to intervene. Anti-suffrage petitions were signed in pubs. But the fight was over. On 19 September, Glasgow signed the electoral bill, and it became law. The women had won.

Suffragettes



THE SUMMIT AT LAST.

Two months later, New Zealand had a national election. Over ninety thousand women voted for the first time – two out of every three adult women in the country. Around the world, the event was huge news, especially in Britain and the United States, where women had to wait almost three more decades before they won the same voting rights.

RIGHT: Suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst being arrested in London in the early 1900s

FAR LEFT: Richard Seddon, Prime Minister of New Zealand 1893–1906

Women in Britain who wanted the vote were called suffragettes. To draw attention to their cause, they smashed windows, chained themselves to railings, and blew up the prime minister's country house. One suffragette, Emily Davison, died when she ran in front of the king's racehorse.

Suffragettes who broke the law were put in jail, where many went on hunger strike. Worried that these women would die and win sympathy for their cause, the government had them force-fed. In 1913, it passed what became known as the Cat and Mouse Act. Weak hunger strikers were released and put back in jail once they became stronger.

The First World War interrupted the British suffrage movement, but ultimately, the war helped the women's cause. The huge role they played in the war effort – as coal miners and farm workers among other things – meant their demands could no longer be denied. In 1918, women over the age of thirty could vote if they met certain criteria, such as owning property. This was finally extended in 1928 to all women over the age of twenty-one – the same as men.





ABOVE: A poster from the British suffrage campaign



RIGHT: Women in Auckland in 1899 going to vote in the national election

OTHER FEMALE FIRSTS

All women over the age of twenty-one, both Pākehā and Māori, gain the right to vote in New Zealand.

All white women in Australia gain the right to vote in federal elections.

Some British women over the age of thirty gain the right to vote and can stand for parliament.

Women in the United States gain the right to vote.

1893

1894

1902

1906

1918

1919

1920

Women in South Australia gain the right to vote and stand for the South Australian parliament.

Women in Finland gain the right to vote. The following year, nineteen women MPs are elected in Finland.

New Zealand women gain the right to become MPs.



Iriaka Rātana becomes the first Māori woman to be elected to parliament.

Swiss women gain the right to vote and stand for parliament.

Helen Clark becomes New Zealand's first female prime minister to win a general election.

1933

1949

1962

1971

1997

1999

2001

Elizabeth McCombs becomes the first female MP in New Zealand.

Aboriginal women in Australia gain the right to vote.

Jenny Shipley becomes New Zealand's first female prime minister.

Dame Silvia Cartwright is New Zealand's Governor-General. Helen Clark is Prime Minister. Sian Elias is Chief Justice. Margaret Wilson is Attorney-General.

Stitches



by Mary McCallum

It was May's last day with Harriet Marwick. When she woke up, this was the first thing she thought. The second thing she thought was that Angel was dead. Her skinny white cat, who'd normally be snuggling in bed, keeping her warm, was in heaven with all the other angels. How many birds had Angel killed? May wondered. Would they be up there, too, along with all the mice?

On the other side of the door, May could hear the rustles and snappings as Papa set the fire, the *whht* of the match, and the low roar as the fire took hold and began to heat the stove for breakfast. May snuggled under the blankets and moved closer to Rose. Her sister snorted in her sleep and turned over. It was so cold May's scalp tingled.

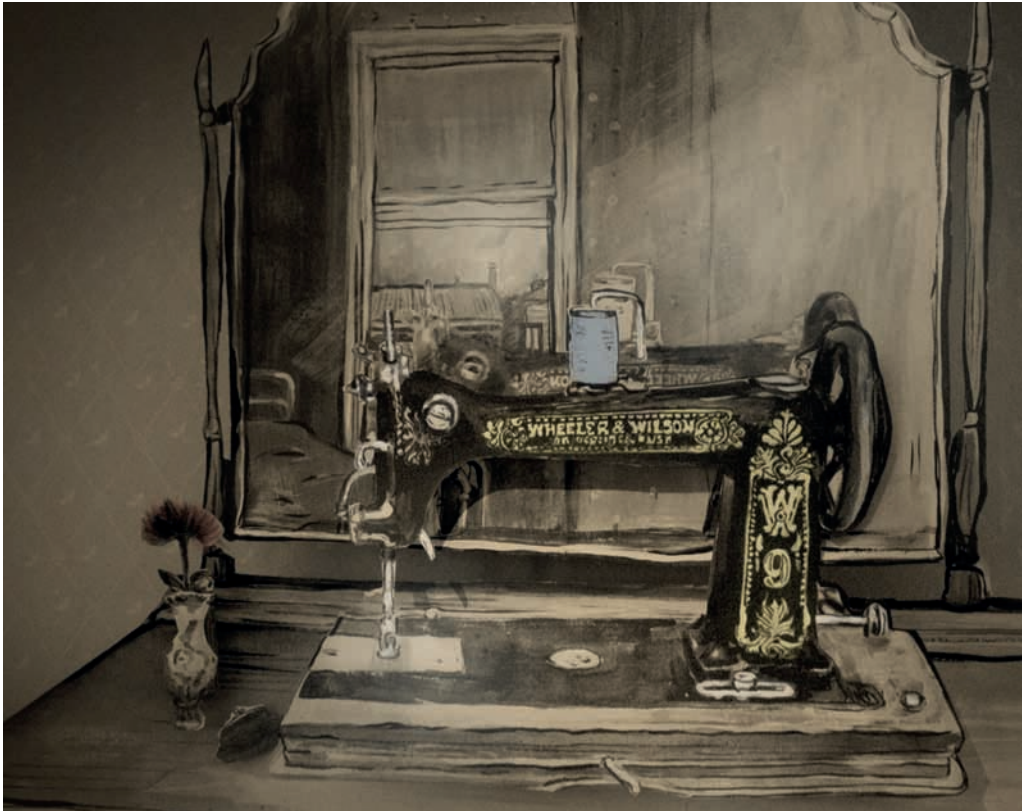
Now Papa was polishing the family boots: *shoe-shoe-shoe* with the brush. Seven pairs, one by one. Her father was a cobbler and had made them all by hand, from Ma's high-buttoned black boots to the soft leather slippers for the baby. He'd stitched those by lamplight at the kitchen table.

"You take after your old dad, May," Papa had said, too many times for May to count. "Nimble fingers." He'd shown her how to thread a needle in the blink of an eye, how to sew an even row of tiny stitches. When she turned twelve and finished school, it was Papa who had encouraged May to work in people's homes, helping with their dressmaking. How many dresses had she sewn over the past year? Fourteen? No, it was sixteen if you included the two little ones she'd made for Harriet's cousin. So many bolts of fabric and pin-pricked fingers, so many tiresome stitches.

Here was Ma's voice in the kitchen. The sound of the kettle. It was time for May to get moving. "Up," she said to her sister, providing a jab in the ribs for good measure.

Rose grumbled but didn't open her eyes.

"Now," hissed May. "It's my last day," she added, a sad catch in her voice. Not that this was of any consequence to Rose. She was top of the class at Thorndon School and not at all interested in what May did all day. Rose claimed she was going to stay on at school because she was so good at it. May wasn't so sure. Why would things be any different for Rose? May had been top of her class, too.



Before she threw back the covers, May's eyes fell on the brand-new Wheeler & Wilson sewing machine, which stood black and gleaming like a cat on the dresser. How wonderful of Papa to buy it for her! He'd talked about nothing else since he'd brought it home: how many dresses May could sew in a week *right here in her bedroom*, how much money she could make, what a help it would be. May jumped out of bed, pulled a cardigan over her nightgown, and went through to the kitchen.

Her parents were sitting at the table, drinking tea. The oaty smell of porridge filled the kitchen, and all in a row by the back door were the polished boots, lined up from biggest to smallest. May could hear the boys fighting in their bedroom while they got dressed. They were always fighting.

"Good morning, Maysie," said Ma, patting the chair beside her. "Warm up by me."

Her father nodded. "Last day, eh? Your mama's looking forward to you being home for a bit."

"We'll make a good team," said Ma, her eyes encouraging. "I'll enjoy the company."

May wanted to say something nice back, but she couldn't. What she felt right then was far from nice. Finishing up with Harriet and her family was far worse than her last day at school.

"I need to use the privy, Ma," she said, trying to smile. She walked past her mother and the iron stove with its warm belly, pulled on her boots, and headed outside.

The sun hadn't yet come over the hills, and there was an extra-deep coldness in the garden as if the night had left something behind. "Last day, last day, last day," the frosty grass crunched. May balled up her fists inside the sleeves of her cardigan. "Shut up, shut up, shut up!" she hissed back through her teeth.

"It *was* exciting, wasn't it?" she thought. A brand-new sewing machine? Working at home? May didn't want to disappoint her parents, but she was worried. What if she had a problem with sewing in a sleeve – who would help her? And more importantly, who would she talk to? Ma would be busy with the baby. There would be no Harriet.

After May had dressed and fed the chooks and told off the boys and eaten her breakfast of porridge and milk, she set off for Harriet's house, out through the gate and down the zigzag to Tinakori Road. She loved the zigs and she loved the zags, each with its own view of the city. The zigs took her towards the new Botanic Gardens, with the roses and the spindly trees and the glow worms at night, and the zags took her towards the harbour, shiny as a mirror today. She felt like two different people as she walked: a zig person and a zag person. Zig. Zag. Excited. Sad.

Six weeks at the Marwicks'. It had gone so quickly. While they stitched, May had listened to Harriet talk about her wedding plans: Silk or satin? Rosebuds or lilies? Great-aunt Joan with the beak nose or not Great-aunt Joan with the beak nose? There was no shortage of things to discuss.

Harriet's house was the best place May had ever worked. She'd been very happy there. Not all of her placements had been so good.

As soon as she'd heard May was leaving school, Mrs Crane from around the corner had asked if she would help finish off a black mourning dress because Mr Crane had died. Mrs Crane had a strange little cough and eyes that shone like hatpins. May didn't much like doing her sewing. Before the dress was finished, Mrs Crane announced she was marrying Mr Jamieson next door and needed a wedding dress instead. They'd had to make it lickety-split, buying the pale satin from a fancy store on Lambton Quay.



After that, Mrs Drysdale up in Brooklyn had asked May to come and help sew dresses for her tour of Europe. She was a singer, so the gowns needed to have a lot of give around the chest to hold her expanding rib cage. May liked that job. Mrs Drysdale had lots of stories about travelling the world.

Then came a family with three boys and lots of difficult little shirts and trousers. And so a year had passed, and May was thirteen. On her birthday, she was sent down the zigzag and along the road to the Marwicks'. They needed dresses for Harriet, who was sixteen and getting married. Harriet! She was supposed to be grown up, and she wasn't at all. From the first day, she'd treated May like her best friend, giggling over the story May told about Mrs Crane and the wedding dress and then telling her own story about her mother-in-law-to-be, too fat for a dress she'd had made and getting stuck with her arms in the air. They'd laughed so hard, they'd had to stop sewing and just breathe.

May and Harriet and Mrs Marwick had just the last hem and buttons to do, and the job would be over. Then Harriet would turn into a married woman and go to live in Auckland, which was just about as sad as Angel dying. From tomorrow, there would be no morning walk to the cosy house with the chair by the fire they called May's seat. No Harriet to shriek when she came through the door: "May Day, you're here!" It would be just May in her bedroom with the shiny machine that purred like a cat, pushing cotton cloth under the metal foot, under the sharp needle, and out the other side, stitched.

Ma said she was lucky. She could have been a scullery maid in one of the big houses in Thorndon, scrubbing floors for beans, or an apprentice needlewoman working for even less! May knew she was lucky. But something felt tight in her chest as she thought this, and it made her walk even faster.

She was breathless by the time she arrived at the Marwicks'. Her cheeks were hot – really hot – like you could fry an egg on them. May wiped her palms on her dress and lifted the latch of the little blue gate. As she closed it behind her, she could already hear Harriet inside, calling her name and running for the door.



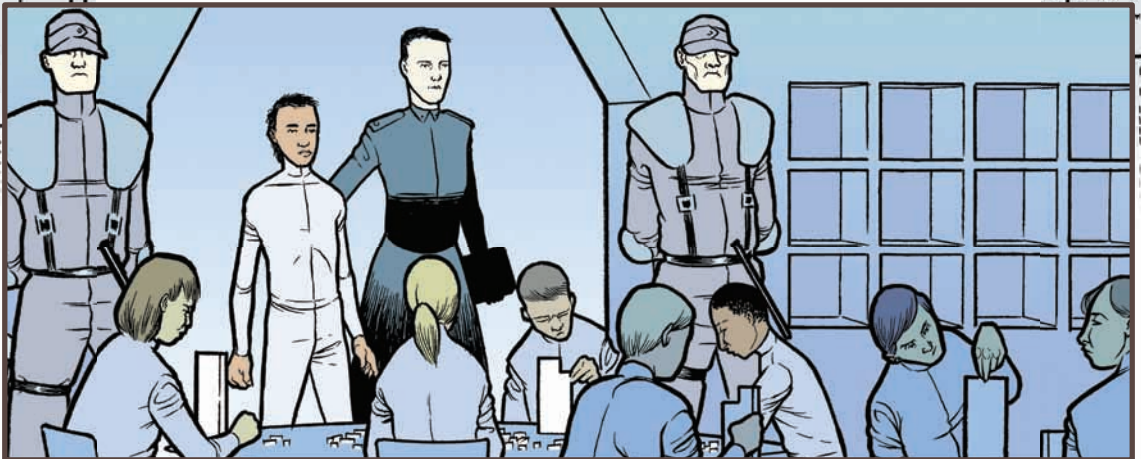
illustrations by Elliemay Logan



HUSHED

by Paul Mason

The door to the pod hissed open, and Tre stared at his new classroom, an uncertain flicker in his eyes. Children sat clustered around tables in small groups. In the centre of each lay a pile of building bricks, white as hospital walls. Tre watched as the students dipped into the piles, searching for pieces they wanted as the bricks rattled and clattered in little avalanches. In the corner, at a table with its own white mound, a girl sat alone. She had dark hair and dark circles under her eyes.



The Examiner, Miss Friend, ushered Tre into the room. His fresh jumpsuit covered him like a food wrapper, the fabric stiff and uncomfortable. Tre saw the builders stop and look up, but only for a moment. They were barely curious about the newcomer.



"This is Tre," said Miss Friend, "transferred from Region G. Say hello."

A few of the children nodded. The dark-haired girl in the corner briefly met Tre's gaze, then dropped her eyes back to the mound of white.

"Probably his first time in a proper classroom," whispered one girl to another, just loud enough for Tre to hear. Miss Friend pointed to a spare chair beside them.

"You'll make him feel at home, won't you, Dove? Zyn?"

Miss Friend smiled encouragingly, and Tre sat down. "I'll just check on the other classes. Back soon." She left, the door sliding firmly shut behind her.

Aware of Dove's watchful eyes, Tre selected a few bricks and cautiously began piecing them together. The class chatted, laughing occasionally, ignoring the drone of the city, stifling and grey outside the thick windows.

"Pace is the fastest," explained Dove, indicating a big boy across the room. She clicked more bricks onto her construction. "But Luna's the all-rounder." She looked admiringly at the girl with blonde hair who sat beside her.

"She so is," agreed Zyn.

Tre looked over at Luna. The corners of the girl's mouth lifted in an unfriendly smile.

"What was it like in Region G?" Dove asked. "Was it awful?"

Tre stiffened. "It was fine," he said quietly.

"No offence, but there's no way I'd live there," Luna said.

In his mind, Tre caught a glimpse of the cabin by the water, of the wind chimes made from driftwood, the string gently rattling. Out the back, he saw the swan plants, a flutter of butterflies.



"It was fine," he said again.

"Why are you here if it was so fine?" asked Zyn.

"You know, I bet his parents were Hushed," whispered Dove.

Tre didn't say anything. He forced a few more bricks together, holding it in, but his eyes still misted over.

"I knew it!" she hissed triumphantly.

"Hushed ... *shame!*" said Luna, the quiet smirk finding its way back onto her face. Her tower was taller than she was. The girl stood up so she could carry on building, her hands moving swiftly, her pony tail gently swaying.

"Luna always builds the best things," whispered Zyn, staring with dismay at her own construction.

"Yes, you mentioned that," said Tre, though carefully, so as not to appear rude. "So when does class start?"

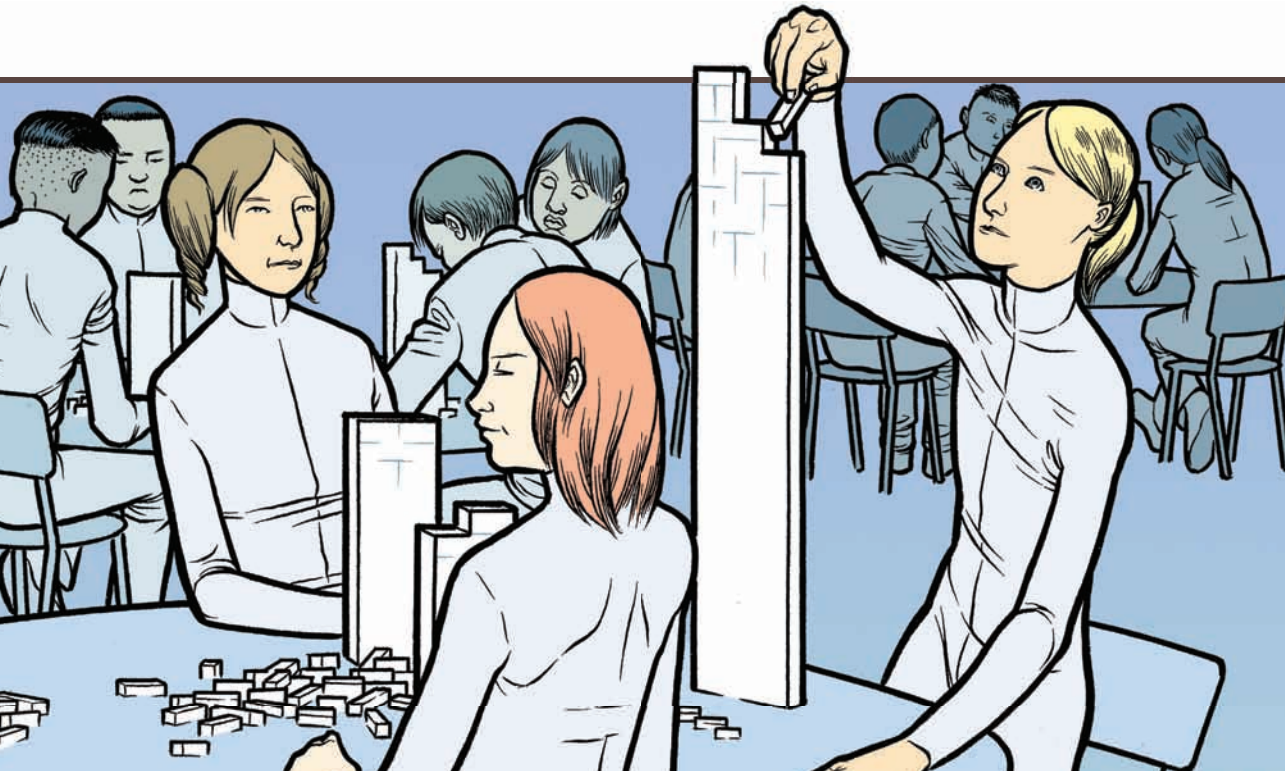
Dove and Zyn looked at each other, ridicule dancing in their eyes. They both began to giggle. "This *is* class, silly," Zyn finally managed to say.

"I *knew* it was his first time," said Dove.

Tre blushed and stared down at his hands. "It was different at home," he stammered. "We didn't do this kind of thing."

"So backwards," snorted Luna.

Tre managed another anxious look around the pod. They were all building towers. All of them. Tall and white. There were no shapes, no colours, nothing remotely original. Each tower was merely trying to be taller than the one beside it: a relentless skyline that went up and up. It was impossible to tell why Dove admired Luna's so much. There was nothing that distinguished it, nothing at all. Tre felt his fear rising.



Tre looked over at the girl in the corner. She was staring ahead, blank despair in her eyes. She hadn't made a tower. She hadn't made anything.

"That's Muse," said Dove. "They Hushed her too."

"Poor Muse," said Zyn cheerily.

Tre kept looking at Muse. Was that what happened when you were Hushed – your spark was wrenched from inside?

He remembered his parents' faces as the Voids shoved them onto the transport – the look in their eyes. It was the last time he'd seen them. He'd only been allowed one short phone call since, and something had changed. His parents hadn't sounded the same. Tre wiped his eyes with the back of his hand and carried on building.

After a time, Miss Friend swished back into the room, tablet in hand. She checked on the children's progress, picking her way through the work stations. Tre hurriedly clicked more bricks into place.

"Not bad, Pace, still a way to go."

"Milo. Nice work. Keep it up."

"That could be sturdier, Star, don't you think?"

Tre watched as Miss Friend stopped beside Luna, who now had to stand on tiptoes to add the finishing touches to her construction.

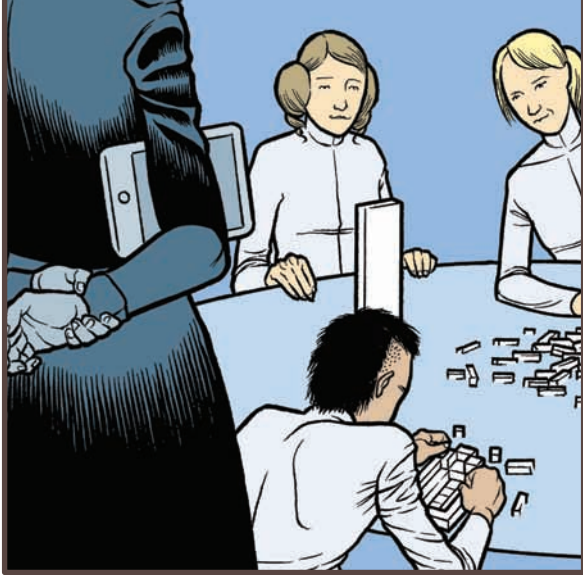
"Oh, my. Now that is the most *impressive* building," Miss Friend said. "Stop and take a look at Luna's work please, class."

"That is just so tall and so straight," said Zyn.

"Way to go," said Dove.

Luna blushed. "Thanks, guys." Then the smile dropped away from her face. She pointed at Tre's bricks. "Miss Friend, should he be doing that?"





The class closed in around Tre like a net. He stopped building and looked at what he had done. He had made a boat. An old-fashioned row boat. Its bow rose proudly as if it was carving through real water. "What is that?" Dove asked with a grimace.

"Doesn't look anything like a tower," said Luna.

"It's a boat – only it's not finished," said Tre. "My dad made one like this, from real wood too." Tre's voice died away. "But that was before –"

"Well, we don't make that sort of thing here," snapped Miss Friend. She gestured at the other tables with a wave of her tablet.

"Crazy," said Luna, shaking her head.

Miss Friend changed her approach. She softened her tone and smiled. "You're new here, Tre. You weren't to know. Break it up and start again."

Tre began to pull the bricks apart. Piece by piece, the boat disappeared.

"That's better," said Miss Friend. "We don't need another Muse."

"You should have seen the things she used to make," said Dove. "She was totally out there."

"And now she doesn't say a word," added Zyn.

"Hush, little baby ...," hummed Luna, and the girls laughed.

Tre couldn't bear to listen. The fear came once more, stronger this time. He got to his feet and went over to Muse. He was desperate to see a glimmer, some life in her eyes. Something that told him he wasn't alone. But she just stared ahead.



Then Tre saw it. Spelt out in front of Muse on the table. A single word:

RUN

"Come away from there, Tre," hissed Miss Friend.

..... **To be continued ...**

ASTROBIOLOGY

FINDING EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE

BY STEVE POINTING

People have always been intrigued by the idea of life on other planets. But how would we feel if something were discovered? And what would it mean for us? Some people imagine scenes straight out of a science-fiction movie: invasion by a cruel species hell-bent on domination. Others are more optimistic. They picture cute aliens like E.T., who just want to be friends.

Given all the speculation, what are the facts? What are the chances of discovering extraterrestrial life? What would this life be, and where's it likely to be found? The people who work to answer these questions are called astrobiologists. Surprisingly, they don't spend all their time peering through telescopes. Many study the life that's right here on Earth.





COUNTLESS WORLDS: AN OLD IDEA

In thirteenth-century China, the philosopher Teng Mu wrote: “How unreasonable it would be to suppose that, besides the heaven and earth, which we can see, there are no other heavens and no other earths.” Three hundred years later, an Italian friar, Giordano Bruno, echoed the same idea. “The countless worlds in the universe are no worse and no less inhabited than our earth,” he wrote. Unfortunately for Bruno, the church didn’t agree, and he was burnt at the stake for heresy!

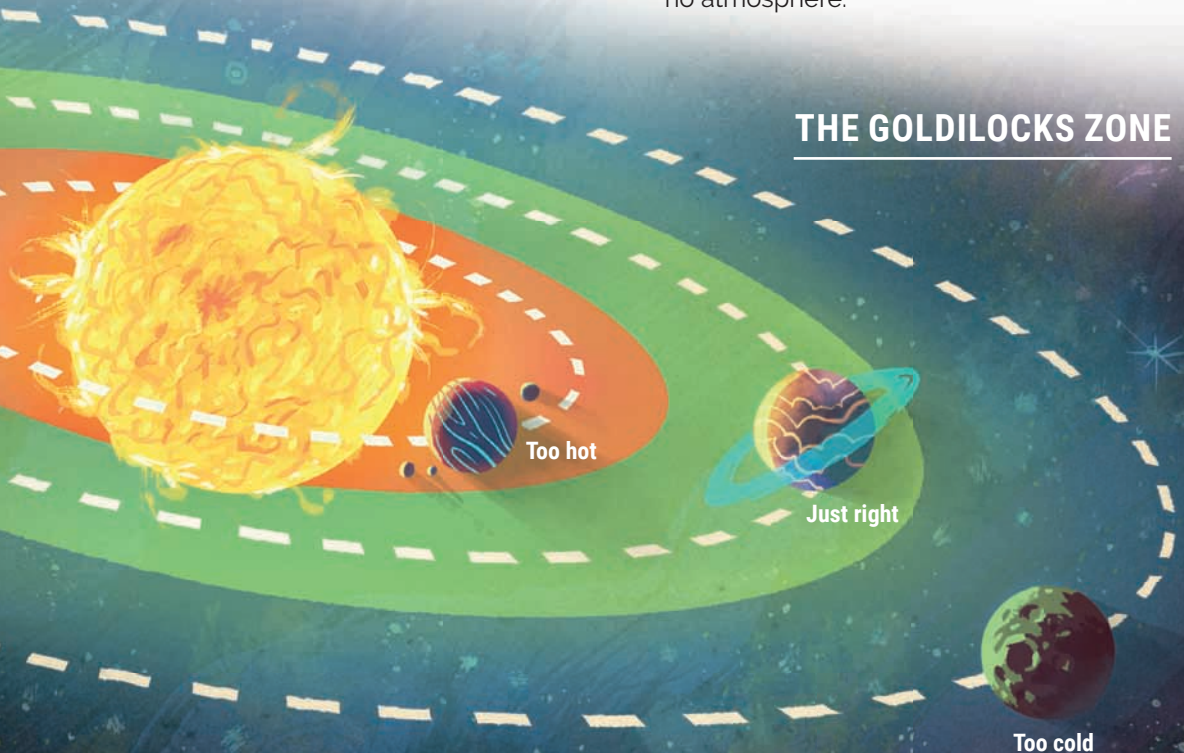
Things have changed a lot since then. Now the Catholic church even has its own astronomers. Recently, one of them, Brother Guy Consolmagno, said he’d be “delighted” if alien life were discovered. He’d even be happy to baptise an alien, but only if they asked!

LIFE SUPPORT

A main idea of astrobiology borrows its name from the story of Goldilocks. You'll remember how it goes: Goldilocks rejects the bowls of porridge that are too hot or too cold, finally eating the one that's "just right". Astrobiologists believe that for a planet to support life, it needs to be in a "Goldilocks zone". This means orbiting a star at the perfect distance: not so hot that all water boils away as vapour, not so cold that all water is frozen as ice. A planet must have water to be habitable. This is why scientists also use the term "habitable zone".

Mass is another essential factor if a planet is to have life. The greater the mass of a planet, the more gravity it will have, and gravity allows a planet to hold on to its atmosphere. Having an atmosphere is important because it contains life-giving gases, such as oxygen. A planet with low mass will have low gravity. This means essential gases will escape into space, leaving the planet with little or no breathable atmosphere. Although not a planet, our moon is a good example of this. Because it has low mass, our moon has much less gravity than Earth and virtually no atmosphere.

THE GOLDILOCKS ZONE



mass: the quantity of matter (something you can touch) that a body contains

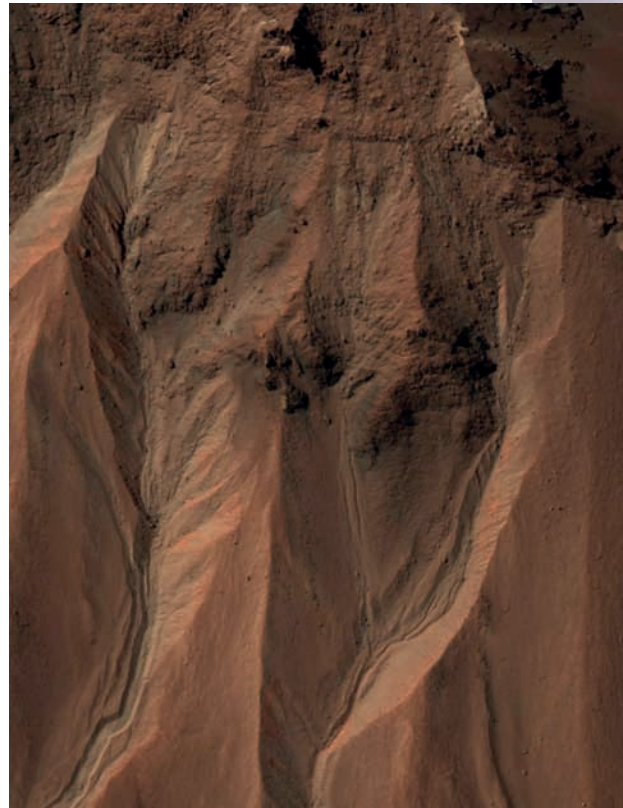
LIFE ON MARS?

As far as we know, Earth is the only planet in our solar system that supports life. Earth is slap bang in the middle of the habitable zone for our star, the sun. We have plenty of water. But astrobiologists now think that our nearest planetary neighbour, Mars, was once in the same habitable zone. (This is possible because the sun's heat and brightness change over time, which means the habitable zone changes, too.) Some scientists even believe that the red planet is still just within the zone.

Satellite imagery and evidence in Martian rock prove that liquid water was once abundant on Mars. Unfortunately, the red planet's surface has since become an extremely cold, dry place. Liquid water has little chance of existing. Added to this is the problem that Mars has little atmosphere. Nevertheless, many scientists believe that primitive life may still cling on, and support for this idea comes from close to home – Antarctica.



Water on Earth: the Colorado River
(as seen from space)



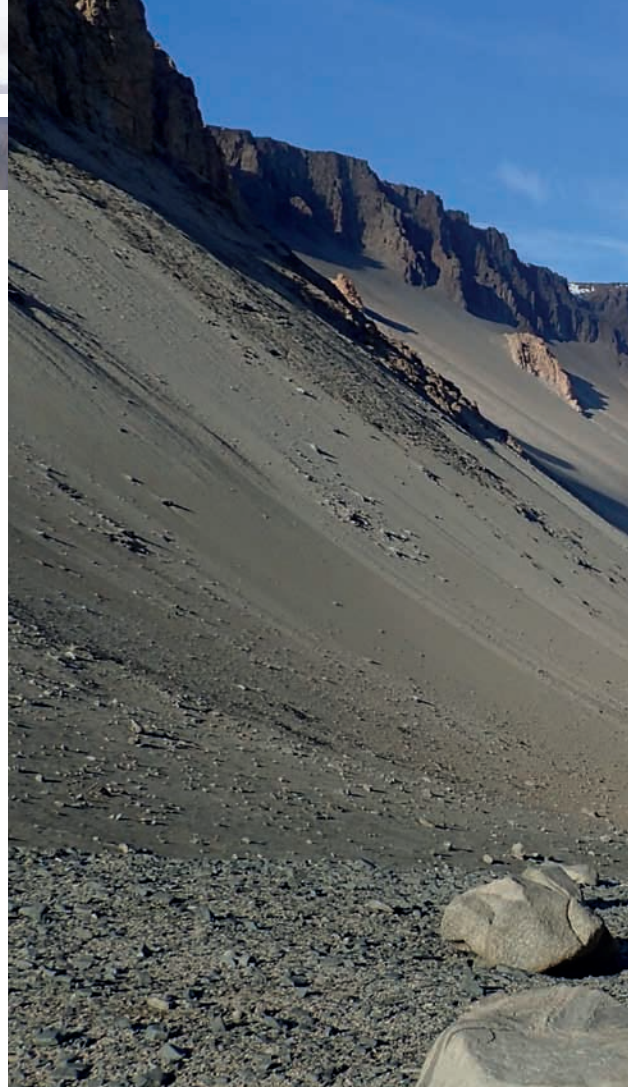
Water on Mars?: Scientists wonder if water
once ran in these gullies.

MARS ON EARTH

One of Antarctica's many striking features is the McMurdo Dry Valley region, the coldest, driest place on Earth. (Unlike the rest of Antarctica, there is no snow or ice.) This makes the region very similar to Mars.

Scanning the valley landscape for the first time, you'd be forgiven for thinking it's completely lifeless. There are no trees, no birds, no sign of any animals except for a few mummified seals that have accidentally wandered inland and met a grisly end. Look beneath the surface, however, and the Dry Valleys come alive. Here, you'll find **microbes**. You might even find a few hardy invertebrates that feed on them. Like a green blanket of life, this layer of microbes extends across the region – but it's hidden for a good reason. Rock and soil provide protection from the sun's UV radiation, scouring winds, and extremes of temperature.

So what's the connection with Mars, aside from the harsh environment? The answer is sandstone. In Antarctica, some microbes live in sandstone, and sandstone is also present on Mars. This is why many astrobiologists believe we'll find similar microbial life on the red planet – and soon we'll be able to search for it. The next generation of Martian rovers will be able to drill beneath the planet's surface, looking for signs of life.



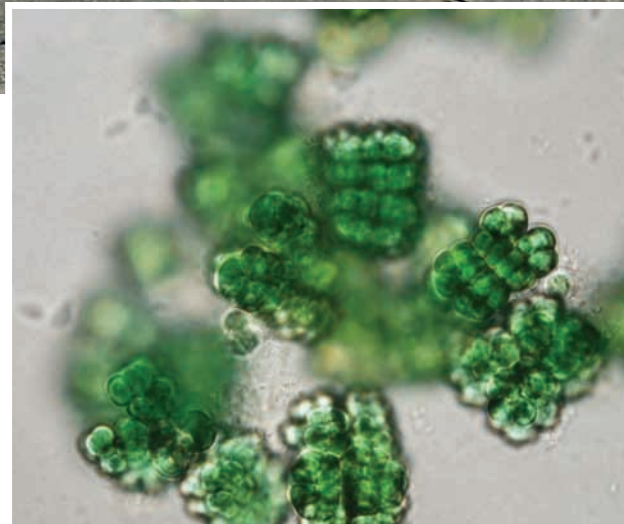
The McMurdo Dry Valley region in Antarctica

Finding microbes on Mars would be a major breakthrough. It would prove that life is elsewhere in our solar system, and the odds of finding it would become more favourable. Already there's growing evidence that life-sustaining water may exist outside the traditional habitable zone. Several of Jupiter's and Saturn's moons have a surface of super-cold ice.

microbes: microscopic organisms, such as bacteria, viruses, or fungi



It's possible that the massive gravitational force of the two planets, or even volcanic activity on the moons themselves, may one day create enough heat to cause some of this ice to melt. And who knows how things might go after that? Recently NASA announced plans to send a robotic spacecraft to Europa, one of Jupiter's moons, to find out more.



Microbes

LIFE AMONG THE STARS

Some would say that the opportunities for life to exist in the universe are endless. Next time you look up at the night sky, consider this: almost all the stars you see are other suns. Many have their own orbiting planets, and some of these will be in their own Goldilocks zone. Thanks to telescopes such as NASA's Kepler, we can see that even our own small corner of the galaxy contains thousands of other planets. The numbers are staggering. It's been estimated that there are more planets in our galaxy, the Milky Way, than there are grains of sand on Earth! The chance that even one of these planets has the right

conditions to support some kind of life is very high. It could be simple microbes like those in Antarctica, or it could be something very different.

So what about those aliens of our dreams – or nightmares? Scientists at the SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) Institute have spent many years scanning the galaxy for radio waves in the hope of finding an alien broadcast. They have yet to make contact, but this doesn't mean intelligent life isn't out there. SETI has scanned only a tiny part of the Milky Way, and we know that our galaxy is just one in a vast universe.

INTELLIGENT LIFE?

The SETI Institute assumes that one sign of intelligence is the ability to use technology such as radios for communication. The use of technology is a good start, but there's a broader definition of intelligence we need to consider: the ability to reason, empathise, problem-solve, consider complex ideas, and interact socially. Is there a way we can search for these qualities? Are there tell-tale signs? Probably not. But if we find an intelligent alien civilisation, we'll need a way to communicate with it. Communication is a necessary tool for all social interaction, as we know on Earth.



A time-lapse photo showing the Milky Way (the streak on the far left is sunlight reflecting off a satellite).

ALONE OR NOT?

Not everyone believes that the universe contains life, especially intelligent life.

The famous Italian physicist Enrico Fermi rationalised that intelligent aliens couldn't exist because they'd have made contact by now. His reasoning has become known as Fermi's Paradox. Fermi believed that any intelligent life forms would have been able to colonise space and eventually entire galaxies. So where are they?

Fermi's argument is strengthened by the fact that stars and planets are different ages, and any life in these places would have evolved on a different time frame. Think about it: if you were an alien from a

much older planet and had visited Earth four billion years ago, you'd have found nothing. Fermi asserted that the universe has had plenty of time to develop advanced civilisations, and yet we still haven't met anyone. So the obvious conclusion is that we're alone.

Whether you buy into Fermi's thinking or not, the next century will be a fascinating time. Some astrobiologists are predicting "unparalleled" discoveries – and maybe these discoveries will come in your lifetime. Perhaps your generation will be the first to learn the answer to one of the biggest questions of all time.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Free online videos by Kiwi scientists: <http://sci21.co.nz>

NASA astrobiology website: <https://astrobiology.nasa.gov>

THEATRICAL

A screenplay by Bernard Beckett

CHARACTERS

SANDY SWARTZMANN (judge)

DELANE WRIGHT (defence lawyer)

LISA (accused)

JOSH (accused)

MAIA ALDRIN (prosecution lawyer)

DINING HALL. MARTIAN COLONY. THE YEAR 2065.

*Behind a high desk sits **SANDY SWARTZMANN**. She is dressed in the tight pressure suit of the colonists. Over this, she wears a black gown. She holds a judge's gavel.*

SANDY SWARTZMANN

I hereby call to order the disciplinary hearing of Lisa Paige and Josh Ropati. Would the prisoners please step forward?

*Two children, **LISA** and **JOSH**, approach the judge's desk. Their hands are chained together at the wrist.*

SANDY SWARTZMANN

You are charged with breaking colony rules 274b and 519.
How do you plead?

DELANE WRIGHT, who has been sitting to one side, now stands.

DELANE WRIGHT

They plead not guilty, your honour.

SANDY SWARTZMANN

(surprised)

On both charges?

DELANE WRIGHT

Yes, your honour. On both charges.

SANDY SWARTZMANN turns to Lisa and Josh.

SANDY SWARTZMANN

Do you know what the word perjury means?

She receives no response.

SANDY SWARTZMANN

It means lying under oath. Do you understand?

LISA and **JOSH** nod but don't look up.

SANDY SWARTZMANN

Look at me when I am speaking to you.

LISA and **JOSH** both look up. They say nothing.

SANDY SWARTZMANN

If you lie to me in court, your punishment will be even worse. Now, I will ask you again. How do you plead?

JOSH

How could it be worse?

SANDY SWARTZMANN

I beg your pardon?

LISA moves her hands to Josh's shoulder, trying to warn him, but he continues.

JOSH

They said that if you find us guilty,
we'll be sent back to Earth.
What could be worse than that?

DELANE WRIGHT

(quickly)

Not guilty, your honour. They plead not guilty.

SANDY SWARTZMANN

Be it on their heads. The prosecution may proceed.

MAIA ALDRIN stands, nods to the judge, and then looks at her notes.

MAIA ALDRIN

Your honour, there is no doubt both parties are guilty as charged. Security footage clearly shows them leaving the compound after curfew. There's no record of any permission being given for this, and both children disabled their GPS before leaving.

LISA

We're not children!

SANDY SWARTZMANN

In this court, you speak when you -

LISA

People keep treating us like we don't have minds of our own!

DELANE WRIGHT

Darling ...

LISA

(angrily)

What?

DELANE WRIGHT looks to the judge as if pleading for help.

DELANE WRIGHT

Your honour, can we discuss this without the -

SANDY SWARTZMANN

I don't think it was a good idea choosing to defend your own child, do you?

SANDY SWARTZMANN turns to Maia Aldrin.

SANDY SWARTZMANN

Please proceed.

MAIA ALDRIN

Josh. May I start with you? Are you denying that you left the compound last night?

JOSH

No.

MAIA ALDRIN

And did you have permission to leave the compound?

JOSH

We just wanted to see Mr Collins.

MAIA ALDRIN

In a court, when you're asked a question, you answer it.
Did your lawyer not explain this to you?

JOSH

This isn't a court.

DELANE WRIGHT

Josh, I think you should just -

MAIA ALDRIN

It most certainly *is* a court.

JOSH

(losing it)

No, it isn't. It's our dining hall. And you're not a lawyer - you grow hydroponic beans, and he isn't a lawyer - he's Lisa's dad, and you're not a judge - you're an oxygen-unit technician. And it's stupid.
All of this is stupid.

MAIA ALDRIN *smiles, as if Josh's outburst has played into her hands. She pauses.*

MAIA ALDRIN

Did you have permission to leave the compound, Josh?

JOSH

Yes, I did. I had permission.

LISA *appears as surprised by this as everybody else.*

SANDY SWARTZMANN

Remember what I said about perjury, young man.

MAIA ALDRIN

And who gave you this permission?

JOSH

Lisa did. And I gave her permission.

LISA

(catching on)

We gave each other permission.

MAIA ALDRIN *looks to the judge, then back to the children.*

DELANE WRIGHT *buries his head in his hands.*

MAIA ALDRIN

I suppose you think you're clever?

JOSH

Compared with you?

DELANE WRIGHT

(beside himself with worry)

We should be able to try these two cases separately.

Josh doesn't speak for Lisa. He doesn't speak for my daughter.

LISA

No, that's right. He doesn't. I speak for myself.

SANDY SWARTZMANN

Are you saying you don't wish your father to defend you?

LISA

I'm saying that just once, I wish people would listen to what we have to say.

MAIA ALDRIN *walks out from behind her desk and takes the centre of the room. She addresses the two defendants.*

MAIA ALDRIN

You left your compound without permission. You disabled your GPS. You visited a prisoner in solitary confinement.

Are you denying any of this?

DELANE WRIGHT

Objection.

SANDY SWARTZMANN

On what grounds?

LISA

I'm not denying it. I'm not confirming it.
I'm saying you should listen to why we did it.

MAIA ALDRIN

Your motivations are irrelevant. Read the colony code.

JOSH

And what if we want to change the colony code?

MAIA ALDRIN

Then you chose the wrong way of going about it. Because now you're being sent back to Earth, and then we won't be able to hear you, will we?

LISA

You can't send us back to Earth.

SANDY SWARTZMANN

I'm the judge, and I can do whatever I want. Ms Aldrin is quite correct. In this case, the standard sentence is banishment from the colony.

JOSH

(exasperated)

This is exactly what we mean. You never listen to us.

SANDY SWARTZMANN *allows herself a small smile.*

SANDY SWARTZMANN

I'm listening now.

JOSH

We wouldn't be going *back* to Earth, would we?
It would be our first time.

LISA

Unlike you, we were born here.
We're Martians.

MAIA ALDRIN

Your point is?

DELANE WRIGHT *stands. He is shaking with rage. He points an accusing finger at Maia Aldrin.*

DELANE WRIGHT

I know why you're doing this. I know why you volunteered for this case.

MAIA ALDRIN

(smugly)

So do I. To protect the colony from impulsive youths who should have been at home out of trouble. Were either of these children under your supervision on the night in question, Mr Wright?

LISA's eyes widen.

LISA

Dad, don't!

DELANE WRIGHT

Yes. Yes they were.

MAIA ALDRIN

But how could this be? They have already told us they left the compound without permission.

LISA

Dad. You don't have to do this.

DELANE WRIGHT looks to his daughter, tears in his eyes.

DELANE WRIGHT

Can't you see? She already knows.

MAIA ALDRIN

Are you saying you accompanied the children on their illegal journey. So this was ... what ... a family outing?

DELANE WRIGHT

It was an education in civic responsibility. Don't you think at least one person on this planet should understand the concept?

MAIA ALDRIN

I would have thought there were other ways of achieving this, Mr Wright.

DELANE WRIGHT

(raising his voice)

Do you have children, Ms Aldrin?

MAIA ALDRIN

(loudly)

You know that I don't.

SANDY SWARTZMANN
(banging her gavel)
Order!

MAIA ALDRIN
Neither does the judge - or
did you forget that?

DELANE WRIGHT
(continuing doggedly)
And is it not true -

JOSH
(screaming)
Be quiet! All of you, just be quiet!

An embarrassed silence falls on the court room. Everybody turns to Josh.

JOSH
Yes, we visited Mr Collins and took him food,
and we knew it was against the rules.

LISA realises all eyes are on them, and this time, nobody is interrupting. This is her moment.

LISA
But that's only because the rules are stupid. And we knew
you wouldn't listen to us if we tried to tell you that.

JOSH
Mr Collins is a good man. All he wanted was for us to
know what's been happening on Earth.

SANDY SWARTZMANN
All members of the colony are expressly forbidden from
sharing unauthorised information from the home planet.

LISA
Could you not do that, please?

SANDY SWARTZMANN
Do what?

LISA
Call it the home planet.
You might be a visitor here, but I'm not.
This is my home.

JOSH

It's wrong to try to keep the truth from us.

SANDY SWARTZMANN

We live in the most unforgiving environment any human being has ever encountered. There are more important issues at stake than your adolescent notions of right and wrong.

JOSH

Like what?

SANDY SWARTZMANN

Like *safety*, for one.

LISA

You're not interested in safety. You're frightened. And if people had said we could colonise Mars but every moment would be lived in fear - that we would scurry about underground like frightened animals - nobody would have come.

DELANE WRIGHT *senses his opportunity. He is shaking now, but it is with pride for his daughter.*

DELANE WRIGHT

Long ago, before the first settlers made the long journey to this planet, people named its moons Phobos and Deimos: fear and terror. None of us who embarked on this life-changing venture ever imagined those two words would become this planet's unofficial slogan.

SANDY SWARTZMANN

Rhetoric will not feed your family, Mr Wright.

DELANE WRIGHT

No. But justice might. The choice is yours.

JOSH

It's different for those of us who were born here. We believe in the colony. We trust it, and we trust its future. We have no other choice. And soon, you'll have to start trusting us.

SANDY SWARTZMANN *pauses to think. Her tone becomes softer.*

SANDY SWARTZMANN

We do trust you. And you're right. Hope is surely as important to us as oxygen. Soon your generation will be old enough to make its own decisions, and perhaps then, some of these rules will change. That will be your choice. But not yet. You're not old enough.

JOSH

What are you saying? Can we stay?

SANDY SWARTZMANN *shakes her head.*

SANDY SWARTZMANN

Rules are rules. I am sorry.

DELANE WRIGHT

Then at least have the courage to tell them the truth.

SANDY SWARTZMANN

There is nothing left to say here.

DELANE WRIGHT

Tell them what it is you're *really* frightened of.

SANDY SWARTZMANN *bangs her gavel twice in quick succession, and two guards appear. They drag DELANE WRIGHT away as he continues to shout his protests.*

DELANE WRIGHT

Tell them about the rules you haven't written down. Explain to them why you've decided that no colonist will ever be allowed to choose their own marriage partner. Why are you so afraid of love?

SANDY SWARTZMANN

The needs of the colony always come before the needs of the individual. Get him out!

DELANE WRIGHT

You might as well try to stop the planet turning.

JOSH and **LISA** *look at one another. They embrace.*

THE END

Origin Story

by David Larsen

(with
fairy)




“Hello,” said the superhero fairy. “I’m the superhero fairy.”

“That’s the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard,” Moana did not say. The words came into her head as a good reply, but she was distracted by the way the oncoming truck and the two-year-old and the street had all vanished. And by the fact that she couldn’t move.

“You’re probably wondering why you can’t move,” said the superhero fairy. It was unclear whether it was a female fairy or a male one. It was slender and long-haired and wore a sparkly blue leotard thing with striped leggings and a red cape. It had pointy ears. It was hovering in mid-air, surrounded by a riot of rainbow flecks of light. Moana didn’t know how she knew all this. The fairy was off to one side, and she couldn’t move her head to look at it. She couldn’t even move her eyes. The swarming lights were all around her as well.

“This is your origin story!” said the fairy. “It’s very exciting! Let’s do a flashback.”



The sleeting rainbow colours cleared. Moana still couldn't move or even feel her body. It was like a movie was being projected into her head. She saw the street again, but this time from above and from a distance, as though she were standing on a platform in the sky. The usual after-school traffic was whooshing by. "An ordinary day," announced the fairy. "Or is it?"

On the far side of the road, a large red ball came bouncing down a driveway. A little boy came charging after it. There was a truck a few car lengths down the road, going a little bit faster than it should. A girl was walking past on the nearer side of the road. She was in Moana's school uniform. She had Moana's face. "An ordinary girl!" proclaimed the fairy. "Or is she?"

Moana knew what would happen next because it had happened already. Less than a minute ago. The little boy ran after his ball. The ball bounced onto the road. The little boy didn't look, and so he didn't see the truck. Moana saw herself see it and start to run: an instant, headlong, hopeless dash. The truck's brakes squealed. It had no chance of stopping in time. The Moana from a minute ago barely missed being hit by a car as she sprinted towards the boy. She had no chance, either. The image froze.

"What do you think happens next?" asked the fairy.

Moana still couldn't move, and she still couldn't speak. The fairy floated around to stand in front of the scene. For the first time, Moana noticed that it was only about 20 centimetres tall.

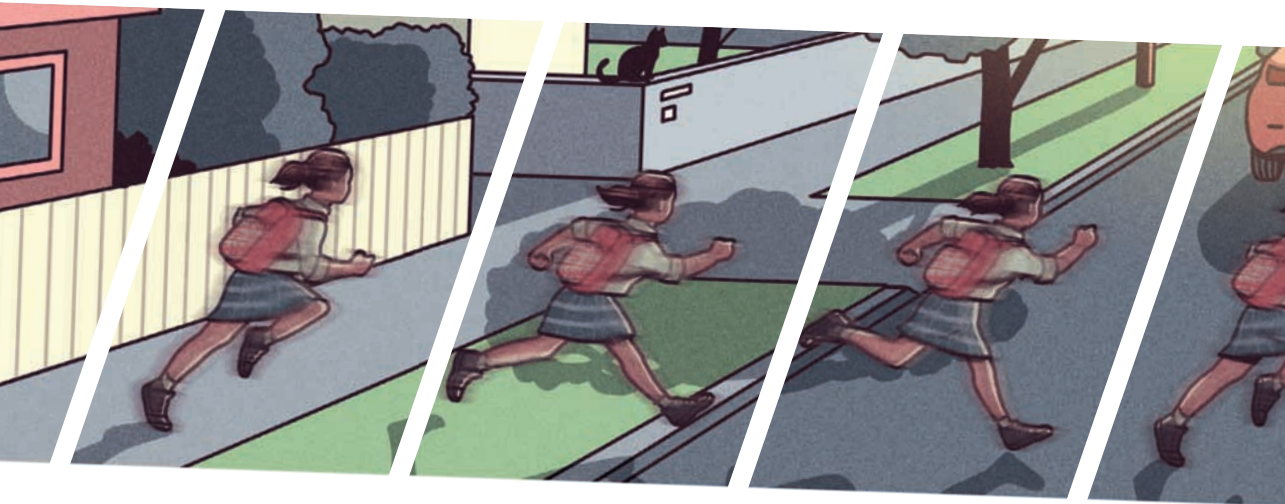
"What happens next," said the fairy, "is a choose-your-own-adventure sort of thing. Watch." It floated out of Moana's field of view. "Go," it said into her ear.

The image unfroze. Moana saw herself and the little boy vanish. They were there, and then they were gone. The truck slewed from side to side and skidded to a halt, horn blaring. The cars behind it stopped. Drivers jumped out and ran around the truck. They were searching, Moana realised slowly, for the bodies of the two children they assumed the truck had hit.

"Now in slomo," said the fairy. "Watch carefully."

The image reset. Frozen little boy, frozen looming truck, frozen running Moana. "Go," whispered the fairy.

Moana saw herself whip over the road and up the driveway opposite and out of sight: gone in a blink. The little boy was gone, too. The truck had not moved.



“Again,” said the fairy. The image reset. “Twenty times slower.”

Moana saw herself run, faster than any normal person could run, but only by a little. She saw herself bend, scoop up the little boy, and carry him over the road and up the driveway. There was a garage at the end of the driveway. Its roller door was closed. She saw herself run right up the door, onto the roof of the garage, and out of sight.

“Bam!” yelled the fairy. “Super-speed, baby!” It floated in front of Moana’s face and leant in slightly. Its expression was abruptly stern. “Now all you have to do is tell me how you did it.”

The street, the cars, the truck, and the people all dissolved. Moana and the fairy were floating alone in the middle of the rainbow blizzard of lights. She found she could speak. “This is crazy!” she yelled. “How are you doing this?”

“Yes!” said the fairy. “Exactly the question!”

“Then answer it!”

“Superheroes,” said the fairy seriously, “are impossible. Ridiculous, crazy, impossible.”

“No they’re not! They’re real! Catman! The Baroness! Alligator Woman and Sidekick Girl!”

“Great, aren’t they?” said the fairy. “Some of my best work.”

Moana was incensed. “They’re nothing to do with you! Catman is the world’s greatest detective! The Baroness is the last survivor of a lost alien world! Alligator Woman –”

“Was bitten by a mutant alligator and gained shape-shifting powers,” said the fairy. “Yes, I know. I tried to talk her into a less painful origin story, but she’s all about the drama. We’ll go with something a bit simpler for you, I hope.”



The chaotic dance of the little motes of light seemed to be slowing.

“This is crazy,” Moana whispered.

“No, what’s crazy is super-speed,” said the fairy. “If you ran as fast as you just saw yourself run, the acceleration would slosh your brain against the back of your skull so hard you’d die. When you grabbed that poor little boy, the bones in your hands would shatter. For him, the impact would be just the same as being hit by the truck. And the air could not slide out of your way fast enough. It would be like trying to run through a hurricane. Super-speed is impossible.”

“Then how ...,” began Moana. The lights were definitely slowing.

“You ran straight into traffic to save someone you had no hope of saving,” said the fairy. “You could easily have been killed. My job is to pick heroes. I’m picking you. But first you have to explain to me how your powers make sense and how you got them. Those are the rules.”

“Rules?”

“Everything has rules. You won’t remember this conversation by the way. No one ever does. And you only have until the lights stop moving. Then you’ll be back on the street, and the little boy will get hit by the truck. Or you can save him.” The fairy smiled brightly. “It’s important for a hero to be able to think well under pressure, I’m sure you agree.”

“OK,” said Moana. “What if ...?” Her mind was a blank. The lights were separating into large blocks of colour; still moving, but far slower, and in a pattern now. Slower ... “Wait, I know! My power isn’t running fast – it’s slowing time! Everything else slows down, and I move normally!”

The fairy looked impressed. “Good!” it said. “That’s exactly the flavour of ridiculous we need. How did you run up the garage door?”

The pattern of the lights was starting to look like a mosaic. It looked familiar. It looked like a very fuzzy version of the street. “When I slow time down, gravity has less time to affect me?”

“Makes no sense at all, but sounds as though it ought to,” said the fairy. “I love it! And how did you get these powers?”

The street mosaic was coming into focus. The little boy was a metre in front of the truck, arms reaching for his ball. “I met one of the secret forces of the universe, and it promised me power if I used it only for good!” said Moana.

“But ...,” said the fairy. “But that’s exactly what did happen.”

“I know!”

The fairy looked outraged. Then it looked thoughtful. Then it started to laugh and, laughing, it faded slowly away.

Moana was standing in the middle of the street. The cars, the truck, and the little boy were motionless around her.

She began to run.

illustrations by Ross Murray



TITLE	READING YEAR LEVEL
How to Fall	7
Stitches	7
Hushed	7
Origin Story (with fairy)	8
The Fight to Vote	7
Astrobiology: Finding Extraterrestrial Life	8
The Trial	8

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