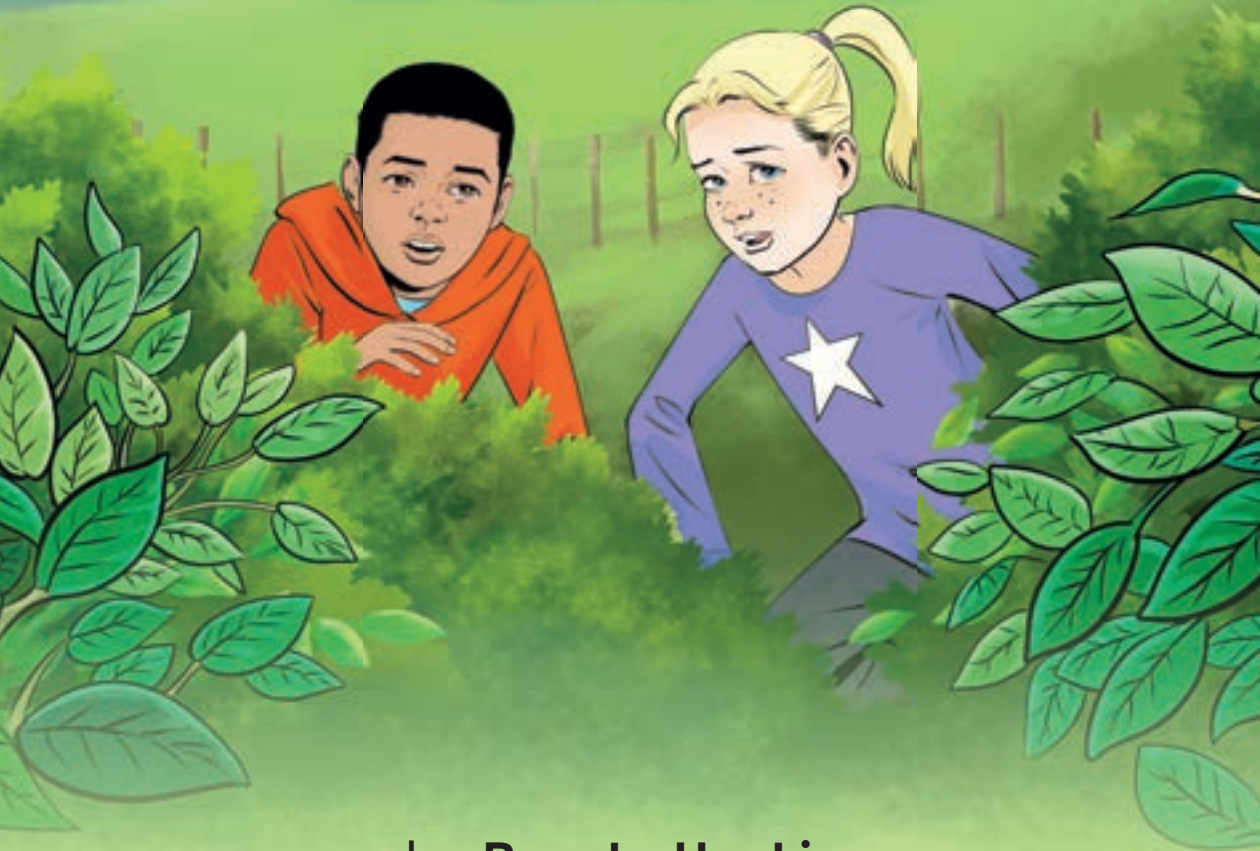


The Thief



by **Renata Hopkins**
illustrated by **Andrew Burdan**

*Ready
to Read*

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Manu (Ma-noo).

For more support with pronunciation, go to www.readytoread.tki.org.nz
to hear an audio version of the text.

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Chapter 1

Keep Out!



Sophie had made a sign: SOPHIE'S HUT – KEEP OUT!
She glared at Manu. “Got it?”

Manu didn't get it. “Why? You let me play in it yesterday.”

It was true. The cousins had spent all day in the hut, and they hadn't fought once.

Sophie kicked a pine cone, hard. “You stole my treasure!”

Manu frowned. “What treasure?”

“You know what I mean,” Sophie shouted.

Manu felt so mad that he kicked a pine cone, too. It hurt his toe.
“I never touched your stupid treasure,” he said. He started to walk away. “And I'm going to build a way better hut.”

“Are not,” Sophie yelled.

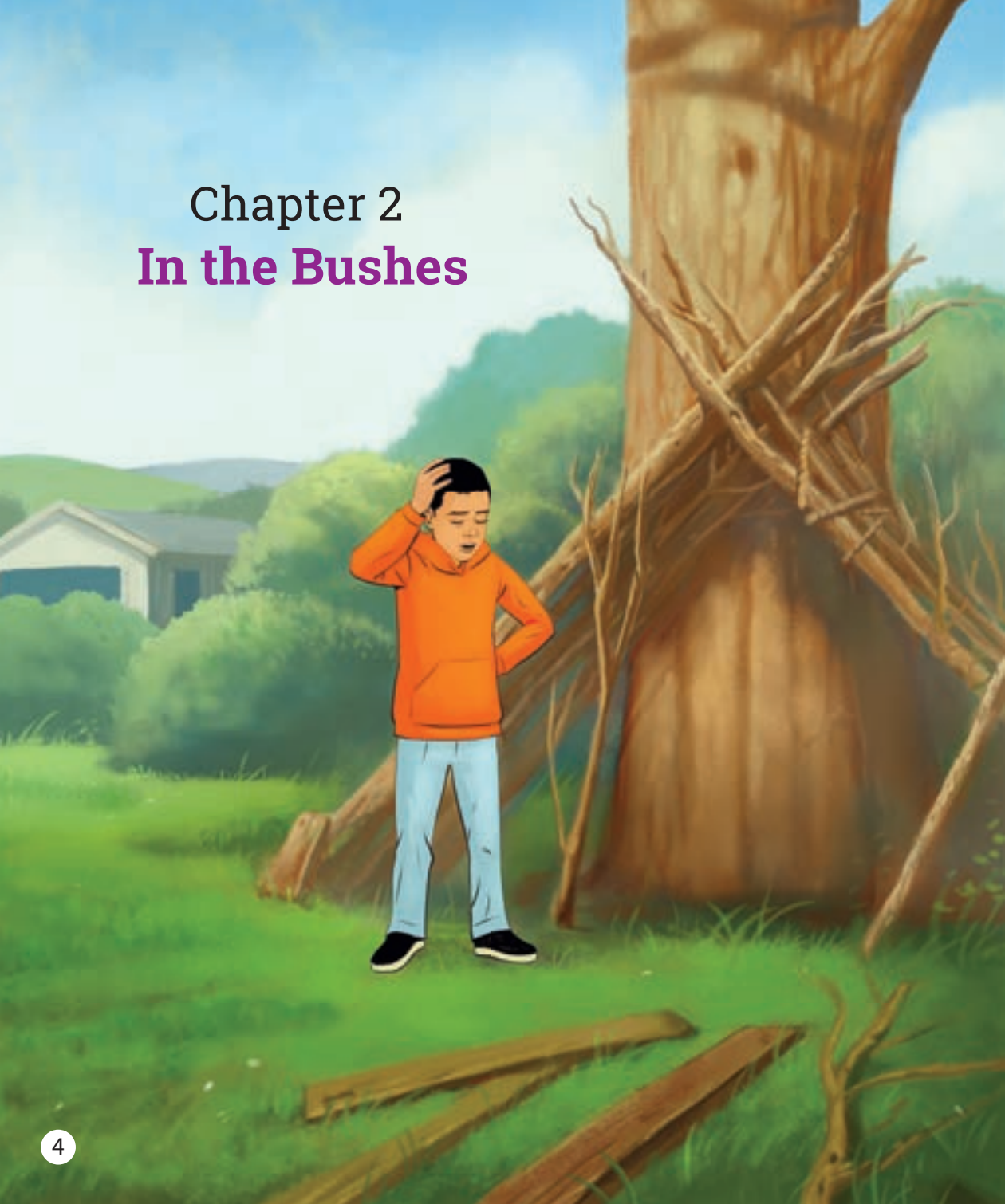
“ARE SO!”

He meant it. Sophie's hut was cool, but his would be epic.
He'd show her.



Chapter 2

In the Bushes



Half an hour later, Manu had made two walls out of some tree branches. But the walls were wobbly and had big gaps. Sophie's hut was way better. "I need some longer bits of wood," he thought. Manu remembered seeing a stack of old wood by the garage. Maybe his Aunty Alex would let him use some.

Halfway back to the house, Manu heard a rustle in the bushes. He crouched down to have a look. "Stop spying, Sophie," he said.

Suddenly, a brown bird ran out of the bushes. Manu was so surprised he almost fell over backwards.

The bird had red legs and a pointy beak. It strutted up to Manu's foot and tried to peck his shoelace.

"Hey!" yelled Manu. The bird darted back into the bushes.



Manu found Aunty Alex by the sheep paddock. He asked if he could use some of the wood.

“Let’s have a look,” Aunty Alex said. “We might need to pull some old nails out first.”

On the way to the garage, Manu told Aunty Alex about the cheeky bird. She laughed. “That’s a weka. They’re funny creatures, aren’t they?”

“It wasn’t scared of me.”

“No, they’re very curious. They steal any treasure they can get their beaks on. Then they hide it in a secret spot.”

Stolen treasure! Manu began to wonder ...

“I’ve changed my mind about the wood,” he said.

“I need to talk to Sophie first.” He ran off.



Chapter 3 The Treasure Chest



Sophie was in the hut, looking bored. She smiled when she saw Manu coming. Then she remembered she was mad at him. “What do you want?”

Manu explained about the weka. “Maybe it stole your treasure,” he suggested. “Was it hidden where a weka could find it?”

Sophie stopped looking angry. “Come and see,” she said. Manu followed her around to the back of the hut.

“I was playing a pirate game,” Sophie explained. She pointed to a log on the ground. “That was my treasure chest.”

Manu bent down to look. One end of the log was hollow. It was just right for hiding things in.

“I put Mum’s ring in there,” said Sophie. She pulled a face. “I didn’t ask if I could play with it – and now it’s gone.”

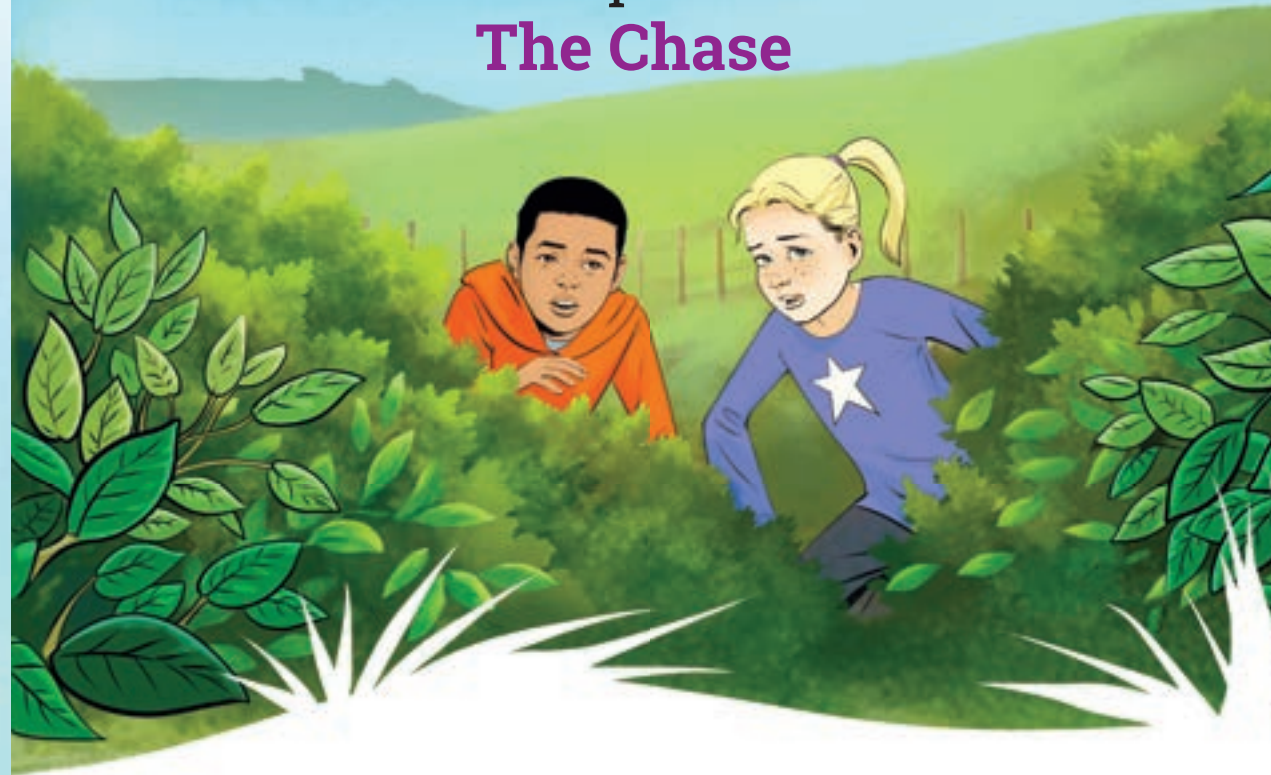
Manu stood up. “If we can find the weka’s hiding place, we might find the ring.”

Sophie didn’t look very hopeful. “How? It could be anywhere ...”

Manu grinned. “First, we need some bait.”



Chapter 4 The Chase



“I’ve got pins and needles,” whispered Sophie. They were hiding near the bushes where Manu had seen the weka.

“Just wait. It will come,” he insisted. “And it can’t miss our bait.” A shiny teaspoon lay nearby. It sparkled in the sun.

“But I’m hungry,” Sophie whispered. “And I need to go to the –”

“Shhh!” Manu pointed. The weka was creeping out of the bushes.

It saw the spoon. It stepped closer ... and closer ...

Suddenly, they heard Sophie's mum calling.
"Kids! Where are you?" At the same moment,
the weka grabbed the spoon and took off.

"Chase it!" Sophie yelled.

Leaping up, Manu and Sophie raced after the thief.
The kids were fast, but the weka was faster. It sped away
like a turbo-charged chicken.



Chapter 5 The Treasure

Manu stopped running. "We'll never catch it," he panted.

Aunty Alex came up behind them. "There you are," she said.
"Look what I found." From her pockets, she pulled a tangle
of wire, some bottle tops, and a purple jandal.

Sophie took the jandal. "Where did you find this?"
she asked her mother. "I looked everywhere for it."

"I saw that weka steal one of my tools," said Aunty Alex,
"so I crept after it, really slowly, to find its hiding place.
They zoom off if you try to chase them."

Sophie and Manu looked at each other.

"But that's not all I found," Aunty Alex said. She felt in her
pocket and held up ... a ring. "Imagine that!" she said.
"That cheeky bird must have come inside when I wasn't
looking." She stared hard at Sophie. "But how did it open
my drawer?"

Sophie took a deep breath. “I took it, Mum,” she admitted.
“Then the weka took it from me. We both like shiny treasure.”

For a moment, Aunty Alex said nothing. Then she burst out laughing. “I guess I caught two cheeky thieves,” she said.
“But at least you’re an honest one!”

“I’m sorry,” said Sophie.

“I’m hungry,” said Manu.

Aunty Alex laughed again. “Let’s have lunch.”

“And after that we’ll make a new sign,” Sophie said. She grinned at Manu. “Manu and Sophie’s Hut – Stay Out, Weka!”





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