

## GREEN COUNTRY



I've got a secret and I'm so excited!

Actually, I've got two secrets and that makes me feel really happy inside.

'What are you grinning at, Debbie?' my brother Billy asks.

'Nothing.' I don't want him guessing my secrets.

'You've got a secret, haven't you?'

'No I haven't.'

'Yes you have! I can tell! What is it, Debbie?'

'I'm not telling you, Billy!'

He throws a honky nut at me. 'Tell me!'

'No!'

He throws another nut. 'Well, I've got a secret too!'

'What is it then?'

'My special tree is bigger than yours!' Billy looks sly. 'I told you my secret Debbie, now you have to tell me yours!'

I laugh. 'That's not a secret, that's a fib. My special tree is much bigger than yours!'

Billy picks up a big honky nut and flings it at me. It hits my arm and really stings. Boy, am I mad! I yell, 'Actually I have two secrets and I'm not going to tell you about them now!'

'Keep your silly secrets then!' he says, storming off.

I know where he's going, back to the house to tell Mum I've been mean to him. Then I'll get into trouble. Why are little brothers so annoying?

I slump down under my favourite tree, the one that's taller than Billy's, and look out

over the bush. I'm a Nyungar girl and I live in green country. At least, that's what some people call it. In green country there are lots of birds and animals and creeks and rivers, but most of all there are trees. Tall trees, short trees, skinny trees and fat ones too. They're all different from each other, with different leaves, trunks and bark. Knobbly nuts grow on their branches and these nuts turn into pretty coloured flowers, which smell really nice. When the bees buzz around the flowers, Billy and I have to be careful we don't get stung. Birds and possums make their homes in the trees. I love climbing to the very top of my tree like a possum and looking out over the land to the blue coloured hills in the distance. High in the sky, no one can see me. It is my own personal hide out.

I've invented a secret name for my favourite tree. It's made up of three words – gorgeous, gem and Christmas. I put them all

together and made Gorgemas. Mum agrees that my tree is the best tree in the world. She says it's like a beautiful gem. At Christmas time Mum helps me decorate Gorgemas. We make paper cut outs of animals and stick bits of coloured wool on them. They are lovely, but the shiny string of bells and stars Mum makes out of silver chocolate paper looks the best.



I'm the only one who knows my tree's name. That's my first secret. But my second secret is

even bigger. Gorgemas has a bird's nest with three eggs hidden in a hollow in the trunk near the very top. The eggs are white with little brown specks.

I don't want to tell Billy my secrets because I don't think he really understands what a secret is. Besides, Mum told us she is expecting a visitor, and I don't want Billy blabbing my special secrets to just anyone.

## SURPRISE!

‘Come on you kids!’ Mum calls after lunch.  
‘It’s time to go to the train station.’

We’re expecting a parcel from our grandparents, Nana and Dada Keen, who live in the city with all our uncles and aunties. Billy is getting new boots and I’m getting a new dress. We don’t see our grandparents very often, so we’re excited about the parcel arriving. There might be a letter in it too, with all the family news from Perth.

As we pull into the station we can hear the train whistle blowing and see smoke rising above the tree tops in the distance. We wait

on the platform. It’s always exciting when the train arrives, especially when you’re expecting a present.

‘Stop jumping about!’ Mum growls at us. ‘You might fall onto the tracks and get squashed, then neither of you will be wearing those new clothes!’

When the train pulls in we move down the platform towards the guard’s van, where they store all the parcels. The guard loads everything onto a trolley and rolls it onto the platform. Mum picks out the parcel that belongs to us then signs the goods form to say it’s been delivered safely.

‘I can’t wait to get home and see my new dress!’ I tell Mum.

‘I hope my boots are the right size,’ says Billy.

The platform is crowded with people now. All the passengers from Perth have left the train.

Mum smiles at us and says, 'I wonder who that is walking towards us?'

We look in the direction she's pointing and can't believe our eyes. Coming towards us is a short man carrying a small suitcase. His hat is tilted to one side of his head and there's a big grin on his face. It's Dada Keen!



'Surprise!' he calls out to us.

We hug him so hard we nearly knock him over.

'So you're the visitor Mum was expecting!' I giggle. 'She kept it a big secret!'

Dada Keen and Mum look at each other and laugh.

I'm really happy. It's the best surprise Billy and I have had in a long time.

## GORGEMAS

Dada Keen hasn't always lived in the city. He grew up in the bush. We love it when he visits because he has lots of interesting stories to tell us about the birds and plants and animals.

The next morning after breakfast I tell him, 'I've got a secret to show you.'

'Secrets are special things, Debbie,' he replies. 'Are you sure you want to share your secret with me?'

I grin. 'Actually, I've got two secrets. And yes, I'm sure.'

I wait until Billy is doing his jobs for Mum, then I take Dada Keen out to meet Gorgemas.

'What a good name for such a beautiful tree,' he says.

When I tell him about the bird's nest with the speckled eggs tucked away at the top he nods. 'The birds must like your tree too, because they've built their nest in it. You're very lucky to have two special secrets.'

'Thank you, Dada Keen.'



Dada Keen bends down and whispers. 'I've got a secret too Debbie – a very important one. If I share it with you, will you keep it safe and not tell anyone?'

'Of course I will! What is it?'

Just then a voice calls loudly, 'Hey Debbie, what are you doing?' Billy comes running up the hill to join us.

Dada Keen waves to him, then winks at me, 'Don't worry Debbie, I won't tell anyone your secrets. And tomorrow I'll show you something very special. It will be a long walk though, so you'll need to have a good sleep tonight.'

Billy rushes up and shows Dada Keen some of the honky nuts lying near his tree. I notice he doesn't say he sometimes throws them at me!

Will Dada Keen bring Billy with us when we go bushwalking tomorrow? I hope not.

I've never had a special outing on my own with Dada Keen. It would be lovely if, for once, it could just be the two of us.

I cross my fingers and make a wish. Please let me go bushwalking with Dada Keen alone tomorrow.

Will my wish come true?