CHARLIE TANGAROA
AND THE
CREATURE FROM THE SEA
T K ROXBOROGH
ILLUSTRATIONS BY PHOEBE MORRIS

CHARLIE TANGAROA AND THE CREATURE FROM THE SEA

T K ROXBOROGH

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PHOEBE MORRIS

HUIA

First published in 2020 by Huia Publishers
39 Pipitea Street, PO Box 12280
Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand
www.huia.co.nz

ISBN 978-1-77550-397-2

Text copyright © T K Roxborogh 2020
Cover and internal illustrations copyright © Phoebe Morris 2020

This book is copyright. Apart from fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without the prior permission of the publisher.

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the National Library of New Zealand.

The author gratefully acknowledges the support of Creative New Zealand.

creativenz
Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa

01

I'M CURIOUS. WHAT WOULD *YOU* DO if you found a mermaid washed up on the beach? Would you call the police? The TV station? Would you poke it in the eye with a stick? (That was Robbie's idea – not mine.)

Before I get to any account of possible eye-gouging by my little brother, let me set the scene for you. After all, it's not every

week that a Māori boy from the remote East Coast gets to save his town from a family of warring Māori gods.

On the first proper day of our school holiday, I'd dragged Robbie along with me for 'beach patrol' – one of the six tasks in my Sea Cadets service book that I had to complete by the end of summer. Not the saving-foolish-swimmers kind of beach patrol but the one that still involved idiots doing dumb things. Today's dumbness was brought to Tolaga Bay from a couple of out-of-towners.

Robbie and I were able to track their movements through the sand dunes to the beach by following the discarded RTD bottles, chip packets and someone's underpants.

'Gross,' Robbie said, using his stick to flick it into one of the old feed sacks we each carried.

'Grosser to leave it there,' I said, pulling a plastic bag caught in the sand sedge. 'We can be good locals and return their "lost property".' Robbie smirked. This was the only part of our patrol he enjoyed – seeing me enact revenge on litterbugs like those guys.

By the time we found them, his sack was half-filled with their droppings.

They were sitting on the beach, their surfboards rammed upright into the sand like faceless sentinels. 'Hey,' I called out. 'You guys left something back there.'

I grinned with my 'we're all mates' face and continued to walk towards them. 'My brother and I have brought it back for you.'

They stood, looking tall, muscly and mean. 'Get lost, kid,' the one with the dreadlocks snarled.

'Nah,' I said. Robbie hovered just behind me and I could hear his quick breathing. I think he was afraid they'd beat us up, but I wasn't. Well, maybe a bit, but we were committed now. 'Didn't your mothers teach you it's rude to visit someone's place and leave behind your mess?'

The shaved-headed one took a step towards me. 'Scram before we feed you to the sharks.'

I stood my ground because they needed more convincing. 'No sharks around these waters, mate. Or dolphins or whales either. Killed because of jerks like you.' I lifted the plastic bag at him.

He puffed out his chest and rolled his arms and shoulders back like a gorilla. 'Watch it, loser,' he said, then gave me a violent shove so that I stepped back but lost my footing, falling hard onto the sand, flat on my back, staring up at his ugly mug.

'Oh no!' Robbie rushed forward blocking their view of me. 'Charlie,' he said, his voice high and worried, but he was grinning as he gave my left leg a hard tug. Then he jumped up. 'Look what you've done,' he cried, face serious, eyes wide, pointing to me.

I groaned loudly but was pleased to see the shocked faces of the older boys.

Baldy looked like he was going to barf.

'Look at his leg, man!' Dreadlocks said, pointing to my left foot, which was now protruding about fifteen centimetres more from the bottom of my jeans than my right foot.

'I'm calling the cops,' Robbie shouted and pulled out his phone. 'You're in so much trouble now.'

I sat up and grabbed my thigh. 'My leg. Oh, my leg,' I cried.

'Let's get out of here,' Baldy said, pulling his surfboard out of the sand.

'You can't go,' Robbie said. 'You need to help my brother.'

I moaned dramatically but, as expected, they continued to pick up their gear. 'You can run but you can't hide,' I said, exaggerating my breathing. 'The police will be able to track you by fingerprinting your rubbish.'

That thought seemed to register in their dumb-ass heads and they stopped for a moment, looked at each other, down at me and then at Robbie.

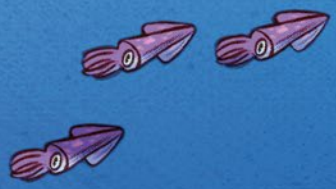
Dreadlocks was obviously the more intelligent one. 'Get the bag,' he barked at Baldy. 'And don't leave any of your stuff here.'

Baldy snatched the feed sack Robbie held out to him and, as an afterthought, grabbed the plastic bag out of my hand and rammed it into the sack.

What would you do if you found a mermaid washed up on the beach? Would you call the police? The TV station? Would you poke it in the eye with a stick?

Charlie and his brother rescue a strange creature on the beach. But why does she refuse to go back to the sea? And why does she keep insisting Charlie is special? The answers to these questions only come to light as they all get caught up in an angry battle between Māori gods.

Only Charlie can bring peace before this ancient grudge causes permanent damage to the land, its people and those Charlie cares about the most – his family.



ISBN 978-1-77550-397-2

HUIA PUBLISHERS
www.huia.co.nz