

FRASER SMITH



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To my uncles:

William, Patuone, Bob, Frank, Kim and John

CONTENTS

1	Patero	1
2	Homestead Again	9
3	Rats	13
4	The Orchard	25
5	Mr Carol's Shed	31
6	Kamikaze Visit	43
7	Kawa Gang Detectives	55
8	Mr Carol's Junk	61
9	Sleeping in Mrs Carol's House	73
10	J.D. Carol's Satchel	81
11	Manuhiri	87
12	Mr Willy Tortoise	91
13	Goodbye, Mrs Carol	101
14	Carrot Comes to Civilisation	107
15	Another Tree Hut	115

1

Patero

Darcy tugged, then growled through his teeth. He sat back on his haunches and jerked hard, ripping another hole in the lining of his smelly tartan coat, and it dropped from the door handle to the floor of the back porch. Darcy dragged it backwards down five concrete steps, his short legs straining to get a grip, his well-fed belly scraping on each step.

His backwards progress across the lawn with the tatty tartan changed direction each time he stopped to get his bearings. When he reached the pup tent, he wagged his tail and barked.

Awa looked up from hammering tent pegs into the lawn and laughed. "You silly sausage of a dog. Are you moving out too?"

Awa got to work tightening the ropes. Darcy dropped his coat under the awning.

"You want to sleep outside too, eh boy?"

Darcy wagged his tail, sniffed his coat and walked round and round on it in tight circles, his butt lowering a little more each time, until he finally slumped down with an exhausted grunt.

Awa laughed. "Ground sheet, sleeping bag, pillow, torch for me ... and your smelly old coat stays out here, OK?"

Darcy's tail slapped the coat, which released puffs of dust and dog hairs. He put his head on his paws and closed his eyes.

"You can be my ferocious guard dog."

Awa lay on the lawn beside the dog and looked at the sky. He missed Carrot the parrot, Nan and Pop, Ma and Pa Rumble, Mangokuri and adventures. He was sick of living in town and going to school. Every day seemed the same. His dad was back at work. His mum was always busy. His three younger brothers had their own friends and, apart from Tai,

had no idea of the wild world he was used to while living with his grandparents. He could camp out on the back lawn as long as he liked, but it was nothing like the Kawa Gang HQ, and Darcy was no Carrot.

“Oh well, it’s the best we can do. Summer holidays are coming,” he said to the dog.

Tai ran over. “Awa, Awa! What’s the tent for?”

“Mum said I can camp out. It’s not like the Kawa Gang HQ, but it’s better than the bunk.”

“Can I camp out too? We could tell Puhaha stories.”

Awa thought about it. Tai had been a loyal Kawa Gang member. He had been slashed by the Kamikazes’ sharp beaks. He had helped chase away Flip-Top Head the leopard seal and his mate and had got lost in a tapu burial ground and been rescued by Carrot. They both had shares in the ambergris treasure, although Tai didn’t know about the other money hidden in Awa’s bank account. And he had helped catch the poachers.

“Tai, we’ve got to convince our parents that we need a holiday at Nan and Pop’s.”

“I’m into that, all the way, Awa!”

That night in the tent, instead of telling Puhaha stories, they talked about their Kawa Gang