

Surf Tales

Cuke Williamson
Illustrations by Fraser Williamson

Surf Tales

Bedtime stories for surfing parents and grandparents to read to their gremmies

1. Magic Sandals

A wrinkled, silver-haired wizard lived in a small cottage right on the fringe of a fabulous surf beach. His name was Whacko and he had gotten tired of being a wizard so he now spent his days collecting bottles that washed up on the shore. He built the bottles into the walls of his cottage so that the rooms twinkled with multi-coloured light when the sun shone. Wise old, wrinkly Wizard Whacko.

One day, as Wizard Whacko was creaking along the beach, looking for more bottles, he came across a local boy named Tim who was standing on the sand looking very upset. Next to him, cast aside in frustration, was his surfboard. Wizard Whacko stopped next to Tim and said, "What's the matter boy?" Tim looked at him with blazing eyes that were close to tears. His coffee-brown hair was still wet from the sea but stubborn curls had their way and popped to attention like springs.

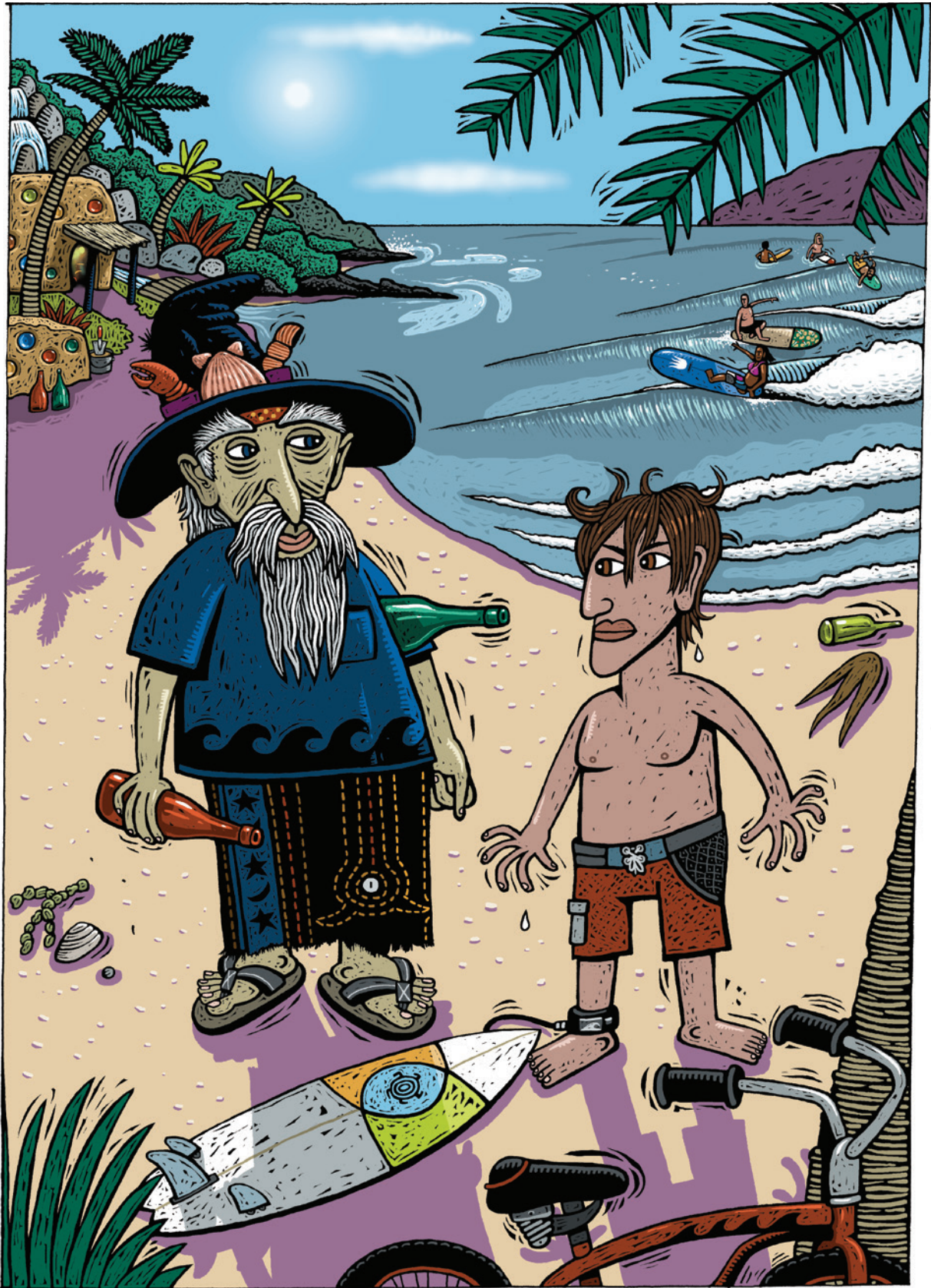
"I can't catch any waves on this stupid thing," he shouted, looking over at the abandoned board. "Everyone has new longboards and it's impossible for me to get the small waves. And when it gets bigger, the other surfers all have fancy new shortboards and paddle rings around me. I just can't win," he fumed.

Now Tim was a nice boy at heart but he was going through a difficult time in his growing up. He sometimes forgot about being nice to people and showing respect. The younger Tim would never have gotten so frustrated about his surfing because he used to enjoy just being in the ocean. However, these days, Tim seemed to find things more and more annoying, and he desperately wanted to surf as well as the other boys his age, so he was being a little more rude and upset than usual.

Wizard Whacko looked out to sea and saw the surfers slide past on small but perfectly formed breakers, waving their long surfboards up and down like slow-motion wands. Now, Wizard Whacko had been retired for quite a long time but he felt sorry for Tim so, with the little bit of magic he had left, he decided to help him out.

Wizard Whacko took off the sandals he was wearing and whispered a few words over them. He waved them around in the air above his head then whispered a few more words over them. Tim was beginning to wonder if the old man was a bit loopy. Next thing, Wizard Whacko handed Tim the sandals and said, "Here you go boy, take these home with you. Tomorrow, when you're ready to go surfing, decide what sort of board you would like. When you know what you want, slap the sandals together with a good, loud crack and the board will appear. When you've got the board you want, bring my sandals back to me at my cottage."

With that, the old wizard walked off and continued his beachcombing bare-footed. Tim looked at the sandals, then at the old man disappearing up the beach, then back at the sandals. He burst out laughing.



“Thanks . . . I guess,” he called out to Wizard Whacko but he was a little deaf and didn’t notice. “Well that was strange,” Tim thought. “Still, I suppose I at least have a spare pair of sandals.” He picked up his surfboard, put the sandals on his feet and started walking home.

The next morning, the surf was still small but it was looking perfect again. Tim sat on his bike, looking at the waves, and felt the frustration and anger returning because he knew that he would struggle to catch any rides

on his board. His head drooped and he could feel his ears start to burn. At that moment he felt a strong tingling in his feet, as if his new sandals were trying to get his attention. He took them off and held them up in front of his face for a moment, turning them this way and that, trying to see something magical in them. The blue bottoms were rough and well worn, and the white tops were browned with age and dirt. Tim gave them a quick sniff and quickly pulled his head back. "Phooarr! Nothing magical about that smell," he said to himself. "Not sure I should have worn those now." He looked them over one more time, then glanced at the beautiful surf rolling in.

"Ah, whatever," he sighed. "Let's see ... I think a nice new nine-foot, single fin board would be ideal for today."

He raised the sandals to smack them together and then added, "Bright yellow."

"Crack!" went the sandals. The noise was much louder than he had expected and it gave him a fright. He jumped, blinked and then stood open-mouthed as he looked at a beautiful new nine-foot, single fin, yellow surfboard lying on the grass in front of him.

Tim got off his bike and knelt down next to the glowing board. He caressed the rails and the smooth, sunny-coloured deck. He couldn't believe what he was feeling and seeing. His eyes twinkled with delight and a huge smile lit up his face. However, he didn't pause to wonder for too long. He had that board waxed and launched into the waves as fast as he could manage.

Tim had the time of his life that morning and was the envy of many surfers as they looked at the sleek lines of the new board, and admired the way it moved across the faces of the rollers. It flowed up down in perfect timing with the waves, curving back and round in smooth turns, the yellow of the board looking like a jewel on the blue faces of the waves. It surfed magically.

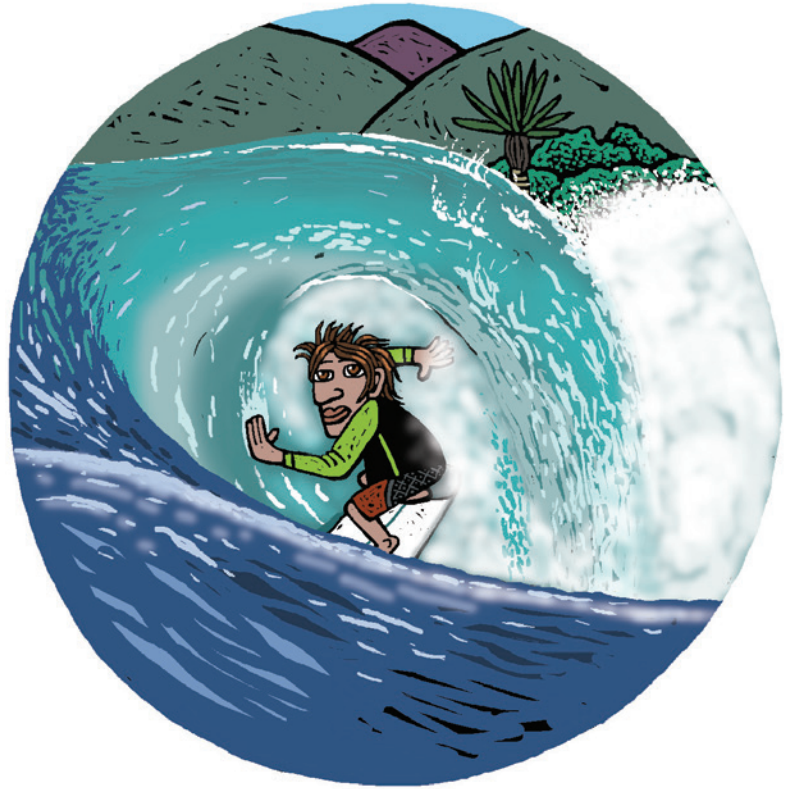
Tim was thrilled and showed off to all the other surfers as much as he could. He couldn't help being greedy, catching more waves than everyone else and even dropping in on some other surfers which was most unlike the usually-polite Tim.

That night, he collapsed into bed, exhausted from having caught so many rides that morning. A slightly naughty grin was stuck on his face as he thought about the precious sandals and how well he had surfed. "I must take the sandals back to the old man tomorrow and thank him," he reminded himself as he fell into a deep sleep.

When he looked out on the bay the next morning, he could see that the waves had picked up over night and that the hot surfers from town were out on their shortboards, showing off their skills. Tim had intended to return the sandals that morning but, as he looked out on the growing surf, he decided that he needed a new shortboard as well. He looked down at the sandals and a little wave of greed broke over his brain.

"The old man didn't say one board only," he thought as he glanced around furtively to check if anyone was watching him. With a loud crack of the sandals, a gleaming new thruster appeared in front of him. It was pure white all over, not much taller than Tim and it shone in the sunlight. Tim grinned excitedly, snatched up the

board and headed for the beach. In the bigger waves and with a magical board, he flew in electric lines across the green hills of water, leaving a sparkling white trail behind him. The other surfers were amazed that Tim had improved so quickly and shouted encouragement as he dropped into a folding tunnel of water. The gaping tube roared in his ears as he got the best ride of his life and was spat out across the rippling face of the wave, cruising to calm water where he just laughed out loud with the sheer pleasure of it all.



The following day, the surf got a little bigger still. The sandals cracked once again and Tim paddled out into the waves on another sparkling new surfboard. The magic continued and Tim had his third incredibly memorable day of surfing. He was totally hooked. With the other surfers telling him how well he was surfing and a steady supply of new boards, Tim began to feel bigger and stronger, and he glowed like the new boards he produced each morning. Any thoughts of where his new boards and skills were really coming from, Tim quickly shoved to the back of his mind while he got on with enjoying himself.

Another day dawned and the waves had faded to a size that Tim felt didn't suit any of the boards he currently had. So, with a quick smack of the sandals, out popped a quad-fin, egg-shaped board in shining shades of blue, leaving him perfectly equipped for the morning's surf. He'd never been so happy.

That afternoon, rather than using one of his existing boards, Tim just created a new one for that particular surf. A couple of days later, when the surf had dropped away to nothing, Tim's backyard was covered with 15 new boards. He looked at them all and said to himself, "I really must take these sandals back now. I think I've got a board for every possible situation." He looked over the collection one more time, and was about to return the sandals to the wizard, but he paused.

"There's just a bit of gap between those two boards that would be good to fill," he thought. "And maybe just a reserve for that one in case I break it." Before long, he had slapped up another ten boards.

Unseen by Tim, Wizard Whacko was looking over his fence at the huge collection of boards on the lawn. He had walked to Tim's house to see what had become of his enchanted sandals. When he saw what Tim had done, and was still doing, he was very disappointed.

“Hmmm, naughty boy,” he muttered. He whispered a few quiet words and waved his hands gently in the air. Then he turned and walked back home.

Tim, meanwhile, was still imagining gaps in the collection of boards, despite the fact that they were beginning to stack up around him one on top of the other.

“I think a five-foot-eight twin-fin, bright pink with electric blue stars would complete the short board collection perfectly. Then I can finish off the longboards and any bits in between.” A mighty slap echoed across the backyard but no board appeared.

“That’s weird,” thought Tim. He turned around a couple of times to make sure that he hadn’t missed it in the crowd of surfboards but there was no sign of it. So, thinking that he mustn’t have slapped the sandals together properly, he let fly with another mighty crack. Still no board appeared. Tim got a little annoyed and slapped the sandals together a couple more times. He spun around on the spot looking for the new board but it was nowhere in sight. He was so busy looking for the new surfboard that he didn’t notice there were actually a couple of boards missing now.

He took a deep breath, quietly repeated his order and tried again.

“Five-foot-eight twin-fin, bright pink with electric blue stars.” Smack!

Just behind him, out of Tim’s view, another board disappeared. When Tim realised that no new board was going to appear, he got angry and began slapping the sandals together and shouting, “Stupid old man’s sandals! Why did you have to stop working now! I nearly had the perfect quiver!”

“Slap!, smack!, crack!, bang!” went the sandals as Tim raged in the backyard, eyes closed with frustration. When he finally relaxed and looked around, Tim eyes grew wider and wider as he realised that the backyard was empty – not a single one remained of all the beautiful boards that had lain there mere moments before. His mouth hung open and his knees began to shake. He fell to the ground and groaned. When he finally looked up again, Tim’s heart broke as he realised what had happened. The greedy, over-confident Tim melted away, leaving behind the kinder, sorry Tim.

Early the next morning, he crept back to Wizard Whacko’s cottage and quietly placed the sandals on the front door step. Just as he tried to skulk away, Wizard Whacko burst out of the door on his way to his morning walk.

“Ah, I see my sandals have come back,” he said, glaring at Tim with his dark wizardly eyes.

“Yeah . . . um . . . sorry about that,” Tim muttered.

“So did you get the board you wanted?” Wizard Whacko asked, pretending he didn’t know what had happened.

“Yes . . . and no,” Tim answered sheepishly.

“That’s odd,” said Wizard Whacko. “I was pretty sure that the magic in those sandals was going to work.” And he fixed Tim with an even more fierce stare.

Then with a gulp and a burst of courage, Tim told Wizard Whacko exactly what had happened and why.



“I’m really sorry,” Tim said. “I just got carried away.”

“I see,” said Wizard Whacko, pondering. “Well, you know you have to be pretty brave to confess to something like that Tim, and I can see that in your heart you’re a nice boy. We all make mistakes at some time and I believe you’ve learnt a valuable lesson.”

Tim nodded and felt a small smile cross his face.

“I can’t bear to think of you not being able to surf Tim, so . . .”

Wizard Whacko picked up the sandals, closed his eyes for a moment and then cracked the sandals together loudly, twice.

Instantly, a gorgeous orange longboard and a glittering green shortboard appeared on the sand in front of them.

Tim’s eyes and mouth sprung open with surprise and relief at the sight of the beautiful craft.

“Now that’s as many boards as any surfer needs Tim. Be grateful for what you have and remember just how lucky you are to be able to go surfing at all.”

“Oh, I am . . . I will . . . I . . . Thanks! Thank you so much!” Tim gushed.

“You’re welcome,” smiled Wizard Whacko. “Now grab those boards and get out there!” he laughed.

Tim tucked a board under each arm and ran off up the beach, eager to get back to the waves and thankful to have any board at all.

As Tim ran up the beach, Wizard Whacko, waved a finger in a magical way towards the two boards in the distance, and muttered to himself, “No harm in making them a bit special.”

Tim found that his surfboards were fast and radical and, despite how hard he tried, they would never catch more than a fair share of waves. Tim never changed boards again for the rest of his life because they never wore out and they never failed to make him happy.

This is the first story from the series “Surf Tales – Bedtime stories for surfing parents and grandparents to read to their gremmies”. The story is free for everyone so please pass it on to any of your friends and relatives. I intend to release the first six stories on my website very soon. Follow me on [Facebook](#) and www.surftales.co.nz to stay up to date on when the stories are available, or send me an e-mail at lukegon surfing@gmail.com and I will let you know when new stories are ready. I’m asking readers to support this project via a small PayPal donation and I will use that to continue writing Surf Tales and to pay Fraser to illustrate the rest of the stories. My dream is that there will be enough interest in the stories that, when I have released all of them as digital books, I will be able to do a beautiful, printed, hard-cover collection of all the stories and sell that on Amazon. I would love to think that the book could pass from generation to generation and still be read to gremmies in distant days to come.

2. Feet on the Foam with Felix Furball

Felicity Furball ran “Miss Felicity’s Home for Lost and Abandoned Kitties”. Felicity had a son called Felix who had been raised by the cats as much he had been by Felicity. Felix Furball grew up prowling the night with his abandoned kitty friends in search of food and excitement. He could see in the dark and could hear things that only cats could hear, like the scurrying of mice feet and the approach of humans. He could scamper as fast as a cat and pounce like one. Felix would lounge in the sun and lick the back of his hand, then, with an elegant swish of his arm, use it to slick back his long dark hair. His mustard eyes would at one moment be wide and alert, then mere sleepy slits the next. His nose and ears twitched, and although he had no tail, he had a restless rear-end. As Felix grew up, he began to behave more like a human but he never lost his extraordinary ability to see in the dark, his amazing hearing, or his feline grace and balance.

The one thing about Felix that was not at all cat-like was his love of water. When Felicity took Felix to the beach, he would play for hours in the ocean and it was only by offering him icecream on the way home that Felicity could drag Felix away.

The first time that Felix saw someone surfing, he fell in love with the idea of skimming across the waves and he pestered Felicity constantly for a surfboard until she finally bought him one for his birthday.

Felix’s cat-like skills and balance meant that he quickly became a good surfer but he hated crowds, so he started sneaking out late and using his amazing cat-like night vision to surf in the dark. He soon became one of the best surfers on the whole coast but all that was ever seen of him were silver tracks skating across the black-on-black mounds of water.

One sunny morning, when Felix went into the kitchen, he found Felicity clasping her cup of tea between her hands and crying her eyes out.

“Oh Felix,” she snuffled, “I’ve been trying not to worry with you this but I’ve run out of money and I’m going to have to close down Miss Felicity’s Home for Lost and Abandoned Kitties.” Then she burst into tears all over again.

Felix was shocked. He couldn’t imagine living anywhere else and, worst of all, what would become of all his kitty friends?

“I don’t understand Mum, what happened?” he asked.

Sniffing and dabbing at her eyes with a hanky, Felicity replied, “My rich uncle was sending me money to keep the home going but his business has got into trouble and there’s no more money. I don’t know what to do. The bank is going to throw us out of the house in three weeks’ time.” Felicity began to howl again causing her blond curls to wobble with woe.

“Don’t worry Mum, I’ll fix it. I’ll get a job!” Felix announced.

Felicity lifted her tear-stained face and said, “There isn’t time Felix. We’ll just have to start packing up and see if we can find homes for all our kitties.”

Horrified at the thought, Felix rushed out of the house and down to the beach where he did his best thinking. On the way, Felix’s attention was caught by a fresh poster on the wall announcing a surfing contest at Octopus Point the following weekend.

“First prize \$20,000,” Felix read aloud, and he let out a long whistle. “That would be enough to keep Mum going for a while and save our kitties. I wonder if I’m good enough to win that. I guess there’s only one way to find out,” and off he went to the local surf shop to sign up for the contest.

A week later, Felix stood on a sand dune overlooking the beach and sighed. He hated crowds but he was going to have to deal with all those people if he wanted to try and win this contest.

“Just think of the money and saving all our poor kitties,” he said to himself.

Felix pulled on his wetsuit and wriggled a bit to get comfortable, then licked the back of his hand and used it to slick back his hair. Felix had added a small furry tail onto the back of his wetsuit in honour of his feline upbringing and after a quick check to make sure it was firmly attached, he made his way down the sand to the contest site.

As Felix approached the main tent, he saw Felicity on tiptoes looking around for him. She had brought Felix’s favourite kitty from home, Miss Pinky Paws, who was draped around Felicity’s neck like a scarf. When Felicity saw Felix, she rushed up and hugged him and said, “Oh Felix, this is so kind of you but do you really have a chance of winning? I mean, look at all these surfers . . . they look very skilled.”

“I really don’t know Mum,” Felix answered with a shrug, “but I’ll do my best, and now that I know you and Miss Pinky Paws are here cheering for me, I’ll surf even better than usual.”

Felix leaned over and tickled Miss Pinky Paws under the chin causing her to purr loudly and give him a glowing kitty smile. Felicity purred a little bit too, then gave Felix one more hug and sent him on his way.

As soon as Felix had picked up his coloured contest singlet, he ran straight to the water and paddled out to the back of the contest site so he could get away from all the people on the beach, many of whom were snickering at his cat tail. He sat a long way out past the breaking waves and gathered his thoughts while he waited for the other surfers in his heat to paddle out. A contest marshal approached him on a jetski and shouted out, ‘Hey, you! Get out of the water – there’s a contest going on here.’

Felix called back, ‘I’m Felix. I’m in this heat.’

The marshal chattered away into his walkie-talkie for a short time, then called back, ‘OK dude, the others will be out here in about 10 minutes. Start when you hear the siren. Love the tail by the way.’ The marshal laughed loudly before roaring off towards the beach on his jetski.

Ten minutes later, when the other surfers paddled out to join Felix, they too all laughed and kept up a constant

barrage of rude comments about him. Felix just paddled well away from them and waited for the heat to start. Felix knew the waves at Octopus Point very well from his night-time surfs, and he had a special cat-sense for when waves were coming and how big they would be. The surf today was medium-sized but Felix could feel some strong waves out to sea, and he decided to sit and wait for those special ones. His competitors meanwhile were catching plenty of waves inside him and building some good scores. Each time they paddled back out they would shout things like, 'Here kitty kitty . . . you won't catch any waves way out there,' followed by more loud laughter. On the beach, Felicity was getting very anxious. "Why isn't he catching any waves Miss Pinky Paws? Is it too big for him? Is he scared? Ohhh, I just can't stand the pressure!" Miss Pinky Paws just purred and didn't look worried at all.

Meanwhile, out at sea, Felix suddenly felt the ocean talking to him, tickling his fingers and toes, and telling him that a big wave was on its way. He paddled a little further out but slowly so as not to alert the other surfers who were so busy laughing about Felix that they hadn't noticed his move. By the time they realised what was happening, Felix was paddling easily into the biggest wave of the day and they were scratching at the ocean to avoid annihilation.

Felix's heart glowed as he felt the power of the wave beneath him. He blazed straight down the face before arching his long limbs into a bottom turn that was so powerful, Felix was able to dab his tongue into the water, lap a little up, roll it around his mouth and spit it out again as he flew back towards the top of the wave. He balled all his limbs up again as he hit the summit, then turned under the breaking lip and blew the back out of the wave. The last thing his competitors saw before they were buried by a wall of whitewater and spray from Felix's turns, was Felix hurtling towards the top of the wave again at an unbelievable speed. The crowd on the beach saw him burst through the crest of the wave and fly skywards in a huge aerial rotation that arced, not forward towards the face of the wave but backwards towards the breaking tube. Felix pierced the top of the barrel like an arrow and disappeared. Just when the crowd thought he had wiped out for sure, Felix came riding back out of the tube and sliced the last section of the wave in half with an enormous, fully-stretched cutback.

The crowd went wild, whistling, hooting and cheering, and that was what the other surfers could hear as they sat out the back catching their breath. The judges had no choice but to give Felix 10 out of 10 for his ride as they had never seen surfing like it before. The crowd went wild again, and Felicity leapt and danced so much that poor Miss Pinky Paws fell off her shoulders and got sand all through her lovely soft fur.

"Sorry Miss Pinky Paws," Felicity cooed as she rescued her from the sand. "I was just so excited by Felix's ride. I never knew he was so good!"

Felix paddled back out but this time he sat well inside the other surfers who were now positioned for a big wave like the one Felix had just caught. Felix, however, knew that there were no more big waves coming for now so he launched into the next medium-sized one that came along without having to worry about the other surfers.

This time, Felix gently cruised along the face of the wave where he flipped the board up on one rail while he rode balanced on the opposite rail, then flipped it the other way and did the same thing. He then viciously cut back, sending up a wall of spray at least ten feet high, and bounced back into the wave from the white water. He briefly lay down on his side on the board, licking his hand and grooming his hair, before jumping to his feet again, pumping the board hard for speed and launching off the close out at the end of the wave into a helicopter-like aerial spin that he landed in the shallows. Felix stepped off his board, on to the beach and bowed. Again, the crowd went wild and the judges willingly flashed scores of 10.

Knowing that the heat was nearly at an end and that he couldn't be beaten, Felix paddled very wide around the break, right out to the other side of Octopus Point and landed where no-one could see him. He sneaked back through the trees to spy on the contest site and could hear the announcer saying things like, 'We've never seen anything like that folks. We don't know who Felix Furball is or where he's gone but what a surfer!'

Felix surfed another heat and a quarter-final that day and similarly left his competitors in his wake, scoring straight 10s from all the judges for all his waves.

When he got home that night, Felicity went wild and all the cats chased each other around the house in a frenzy of excitement. They didn't know exactly what was happening but they knew something thrilling was going on.

"You were spectacular!" Felicity shrieked at Felix, grabbing him by the shoulders and spinning him around.

"Totally cat-tastic!"

Staggering a bit from the spinning, Felix replied shakily, "Thanks Mum. It went well and it was fun but it's going to be a lot tougher tomorrow when I'm up against the really good surfers. And even if I win, the money will only be enough to keep us going for another six months. What will we do after that?"

"Don't worry about it for now Felix. All that is in the future and anything could happen," Felicity answered.

"Let's just celebrate how well you did today and tomorrow can take care of itself." She crept up close to Felix and whispered, "I've made your favourite dinner – steak and catnip pie with icecream for dessert" and she smiled a big, goofy grin.

The next day, when Felix, Felicity and Miss Pinky Paws arrived at the contest site, they found a crowd of reporters waiting to pounce. They all raced up and started asking questions and rudely poking TV cameras in Felix's face.

'Where are you from Felix?'

'Who taught you to surf?'

'What's with the tail on your wetsuit Felix?'

'Is Felix your real name?'

Felix stuttered and blushed and found it very difficult to answer any of the questions properly. Seeing how much he was struggling, and knowing that Felix didn't like crowds, Felicity jumped in front of him and announced,

"My name is Felicity and I am Felix's mother and manager. Felix is surfing in this contest in order to try and win

enough money to prevent our business, Miss Felicity's Home for Lost and Abandoned Kitties, from being shut down."

Then Felicity held Miss Pinky Paws up to the cameras and, in a quivering voice, told them, "If Felix doesn't win first prize, Miss Pinky Paws here and all her gorgeous little kitty friends will be thrown into the street to fend for themselves, and . . . we just can't let that happen!" She gushed out the last few words and then burst into tears. All the reporters and camera operators let out a collective, "Ohhhhhh . . ." and zoomed in on Felicity's distraught face.

Taking advantage of the distraction, Felix slinked off down the beach and launched himself into the water, relieved to be away from the hounding of the reporters. Felix breezed through his semi-final with two 10s but nearly fell on one wave because he was distracted and nervous about all the attention he was getting. When the semi-final was over, he couldn't go back to the beach without being swamped by the crowd so Felix did the only thing he could think of – he took a catnap. He paddled a short distance out to sea, then curled up on his board and dozed in the sunshine, refusing to answer any questions or even acknowledge the presence of the news reporters who had taken to boats and jetskis to chase him.

An hour later, Felix heard his name announced among the finalists so he sat up on his board, stretched his long feline limbs and began a slow paddle to where the waves were breaking. Soon after, the other surfers arrived and the siren wailed to start the final.

Felix found himself surrounded by the other finalists and every time he moved, they would move with him. They had decided that they were sticking with him no matter what. Felix was a little puzzled by this behaviour at first but decided that there was nothing he could do about it other than get on with finding himself some good waves. To the surprise of the other surfers, Felix slid off his board and floated face-down in the water using all his senses to feel if there were any big waves coming. In the far distance, he could feel a real whopper on its way but realised that it might not make it in time for the final. He quickly surfaced, scrambled back onto his board and paddled as fast as he could towards the beach. He took the others by surprise with the speed of his paddling and by the time they realised what he was up to, he had caught a small inside wave and was up and riding. Felix began the ride by turning six 360s on the face of the wave. The crowd roared their approval and, out of the corner of his eye, Felix saw Felicity jumping up and down and cheering. Poor old Miss Pinky Paws was dropped in the sand again, much to her disgust.

The wave was already beginning to close out so, with a couple of powerful pumping turns, Felix mustered blistering speed and shot up onto the top of the breaking section. Using his cat-like agility and light footedness, he kicked his board up into the air, caught it in one hand and held it above his head as he skipped, one delicate step after another, across the top of the wave like a man walking on water, and jumped back onto his board on the other side of the breaking section just in time to power into one final re-entry that destroyed the end part of

the wave. The crowd went wild and the judges had no hesitation in raising all 10s again.

Felix smiled to himself with satisfaction as he paddled back out listening to the continuing cheers and applause from the shore. He paddled very wide of the other competitors and sat a long way out from the breaking waves in order to re-gather his thoughts. Meanwhile, the other surfers began to gather points for their waves and soon had overtaken Felix by riding two waves each. Unless Felix caught another wave, he was going to come last in the final and miss out on the prize money that he so desperately needed.

He dangled his hands and feet in the water, feeling for the arrival of the huge wave that he knew was on its way – it was just a matter of how long. The other three surfers paddled out and sat surrounding Felix, determined to make sure that he didn't catch another wave. A good set arrived but when Felix tried to catch one of the waves, the other surfers blocked him and prevented him getting another score. It was clear to Felix that they were not going to give him a chance and his only hope was to outsmart them.

Felix began to slowly paddle closer to shore, all the time feeling with his feet and hands the progress of the massive wave out to sea. Felix was determined that the wave would be his whether it arrived in time for the final or not. He drifted closer to shore but his ears and nose twitched with excitement as he felt the imminent arrival of the wave. The other surfers shadowed him, wondering what he was up to but taking care to keep him surrounded. Suddenly, Felix turned and began to paddle as fast as he could back out to sea. Behind him he heard the three other surfers give chase and the beach announcer say, 'With only 60 seconds left on the clock, it looks like the crowd favourite, Felix, is out of luck. Unless he can find that second wave, he's going to come last.'

The first wave of the set crashed down just in front of Felix but he duck-dived it easily and gained some more distance between him and the other surfers. He paddled even harder and just scratched over the second wave of the set, leaving it to mash the chasing threesome. And, finally, there in front of him was the wave of the day. It towered above all others that had been surfed in the competition like a green/blue dragon, waiting to blow foamy fire at anyone who dared tackle it. But Felix was running out of time! He could hear the beach announcer counting down the last ten seconds as he paddled desperately to get to the wave.

10! He dug his arms deeper into the water, gasping for air as he went.

9! One last stroke and he was in position for the giant wall of water.

8! He sat and spun the board around towards shore.

7! He began paddling shoreward again, this time in a panic to get up enough speed to catch the wave.

6! He felt the ocean begin to lift beneath him and tilt him forward but he needed more speed!

5! He dug even deeper for two more strokes as the wave became sickeningly steep.

4! His board took off down the wave that was now several times taller than Felix.

3! Almost too late and nearly upside down, Felix leapt to his feet and gripped the side of the board to stop himself from slipping off.

2! He rocketed down the face of the wave, faster than he had ever surfed before, shooting out in front of the mountain of white water that exploded behind him.

1! As Felix arched into his long bottom turn that would take him back into the action of the wave, he noted in that small moment the desperate faces of his fellow competitors as they prepared to dive under the avalanche of water headed their way, fully aware that Felix had caught the wave that would most likely seal his victory over them.

Blast off! And Felix did blast off - out of the top of the wave and high into the sky, spinning like a boomerang that knew to return to the critical part of the wave. He landed and roared down the wave into another heaving bottom turn but stalled half-way back up the face and began to disappear inside the tube. He was gone from view for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 seconds! before reappearing lying on his side along his board, propped up on one elbow and spinning his tail in the air above his head with his other hand. He jumped to his feet and stalled again, as if to ride the tube one more time, but instead he edged up the face of the wave and barrel-rolled inside the tube twice. On the beach, the crowd went crazy, shouting, whistling and cheering as hard as they could. They couldn't wait to see what Felix would do next.

When Felix reappeared on the face of the wave, he jumped into a handstand and then rode for a few seconds balanced on one hand only. As the giant wave slowly diminished and made its way to shore, the crowd sensed the grand finale coming up. Sure enough, Felix began to speed down the length of the remaining wave, eyeing up the final closeout section. He hit the crashing wall of water at top speed and flew skywards in an aerial manoeuvre that included 10 rotations, four flips and a large Cheshire grin. He landed with such an impact that he broke his board and plunged quickly to the sandy bottom of the bay.

As Felix lay pinned to the bottom by the fading power of the wave, he wondered if he had surfed well enough on his final wave to win the contest. When he finally floated back to the surface, he only just had time for a quick breath before the next wave hit him and drove him back under water again. He began to run out of breath as he was tossed and turned by the clouds of underwater power, and he flailed desperately to get to the surface and some air. Then, suddenly, he felt a jerk on his rear end and, next thing, he was being unceremoniously hauled to the surface by his cat tail.

He broke free of the water and greedily gulped in the sweet fresh air. As he recovered, he looked around and saw the marshal from the jetski floating next to him, smiling and holding Felix's tail in his hand.

'I guess that tail was handy after all,' he laughed.

He dragged Felix to the beach where he was raised up on the shoulders of the cheering throng and transported to the stage to receive his trophy. Felix was so overwhelmed that he just sat down at the back of the stage, still panting from the pounding he had taken on the last wave. Felicity and Miss Pinky Paws finally made it to the stage and helped Felix to his feet so that he could take the winner's trophy. The crowd went wild with applause

and cheering, and demanded that Felix make a speech. Felicity handed Felix the microphone and the cheering died away as the crowd waited to hear what Felix had to say. He looked out over the sea of faces, took a deep breath and stuttered into the microphone, “Th . . . Thanks . . . Thank you very much. It’s the first contest I’ve ever surfed in and you’ve all been very kind to me. I probably won’t enter another one . . . it’s too overwhelming.” The crowd let out a loud groan of disappointment.

“I really want to thank the sponsors for the prize money because that’s why I was here – earning enough to save Miss Felicity’s Home for Lost and Abandoned Kitties. Well done to the other surfers, and thanks again.”

Felix handed back the microphone and then went and hugged Felicity and Miss Pinky Paws while the crowd roared their approval.

Felicity gave him a kiss on the forehead and said, “Thank you so much Felix. This is just the best thing ever.” She glanced around at the approaching journalists and whispered in Felix’s ear, “Scoot now while you’ve got the chance and I’ll take care of the journalists. I’ll see you back at home as soon as I can get away.” Then she smiled so warmly that Felix thought he might melt.

In a series of elegant cat-like leaps and bounds, Felix climbed the scaffolding and disappeared into the back of bustling contest site, and made his way home.

It was a further three hours before Felicity returned but she was buzzing with excitement. She came dancing into the house, Miss Pinky Paws under one arm and waving a cheque in the air with her other arm.

“Twenty thousand dollars . . .” she sang, “Twenty thousand dollars . . .”

She danced in a circle around Felix, singing the same line over and over. Felix was very tired after all his efforts in the contest and he just smiled at Felicity and said, “That’s great.”

Felicity stopped dancing and looked a bit disappointed. “What’s the matter Felix? You won the contest and saved the day for all our gorgeous kitties. You should be as excited as I am.”

Felix chuckled quietly and said, “I’m not sure anyone could be as excited as you Mum but I am pleased that we have avoided disaster. I’m just worried about the future after this money runs out.”

“Ahhh, good news there Felix,” Felicity announced sitting down next to him and putting an arm around his shoulders. “The sponsor of the contest wants to put you on a contract to surf for them for the next two years.”

“But I . . .” Felix began to protest but Felicity interrupted.

“I know what you’re going to say, you don’t want to surf contests because they’re too crowded and too busy.” She looked at Felix who nodded.

“That’s why I have insisted that it is for movies only and they have to be shot in places where there are not too many other people. And they were fine with that if you are.”

“I guess so,” Felix replied. “How much will they pay me?”

“Lots!” laughed Felicity who jumped to her feet again and began pacing back and forth in front of Felix. “But that’s not all!” she shouted. “Someone from the crowd at the beach yesterday felt sorry for us and started an

internet site that has already raised \$50,000 towards keeping Miss Felicity's Home for Lost and Abandoned Kitties open.

This time, Felix jumped to his feet as well. "That's amazing," he exclaimed and promptly started dancing in circles with Felicity.

"But I've saved the best for last," Felicity said in a sly voice.

"What? What!?" begged Felix.

"There was a big TV producer at the beach for the contest and he saw Miss Pinky Paws on TV, and he wants her to star in a series of catfood commercials!" Felicity pounced on Miss Pinky Paws, who had been quietly cleaning herself, and whisked her into the air for more dancing around the kitchen.

Felicity, Felix and all the kitties had the biggest party ever that night, and they all went on to live happily ever after. Especially Miss Pinky Paws who went on to star in movies, magazines and books, and opened a whole chain of homes across the country for lost and abandoned kitties.

This story is dedicated to Felix, Iris, Dominic, Yasmin and Greg at Henderson Bay.

Thank you for your support and for being a great test audience.

3. The Elves and the Boardmaker

“Mike Shannon Surfboards” read the sign above the door. In the early evening light, the sign looked almost as battered as the man who was staring at it. That man was Mike Shannon himself and he looked like he had spent his whole life outdoors. His face was brown and leathery, with a fair few wrinkles. His hair was silvery-blond and wavy, and stuck up as if the breeze was always blowing through it. He had a friendly smile and his sparkling blue eyes were still young, mirrors of the sea he loved so much.

Those eyes were sad today, however, as they glanced from the sign above the door to the once proud shop. Mike felt his heart sink at the sight of the last, lonely foam blank sitting on the rack inside the shop.

Business had gone from bad to worse for Mike. Boards had gotten steadily cheaper and were being made in factories somewhere overseas now. These days, hardly anyone wanted to pay for a hand-crafted surfboard made by an expert. Mike knew the local waves inside out and still made the best boards but everyone seemed to have forgotten about him.

Mike went inside the shop, locked the door after him and made himself a snack. He sat staring at the dusty old shop with its faded paint and worn out carpet. Even the surf posters on the walls were old and tired, remnants of bygone days. The only things fresh in the shop were Mike’s sandwich and the last blank that sat there asking questions of him. Mike nibbled on the corner of his sandwich and wondered what sort of board to make, and pondered sadly if it might be the last surfboard he got to shape. He was too depressed, however, and, leaving his sandwich behind, he decided to go upstairs to bed and have a go at the board in the morning.

That night, two little elves came sniffing around Mike’s shop, attracted by the smell of the uneaten sandwich. Mike made very good sandwiches so it was no surprise that, with mouths watering, the elves squeezed through a window that hadn’t been closed properly and fell to work on the delicious snack.

As they ate, quickly and quietly, they looked around at the posters of surfers and surfboards that covered the walls. Then their eyes fell on the blank that was sitting on the rack in the middle of the shop. The elves glanced at each other, nodded and pulled out little knives from invisible pockets in their pants. In a silent whirr of arms and blades, the elves worked their way around the blank until it was perfectly carved into the most beautiful shape. Leaving the board on the rack, the elves squeezed back out through the window and were gone into the night. When Mike came into the shop in the morning, all hair and pyjamas, he stopped mid-yawn when he saw the freshly-shaped board in the middle of the shop. His eyes grew wider and wider as he approached it and began to admire the shape. Whichever way he looked at it, it seemed to be perfect. He sat back on his chair and just appreciated how beautiful it was. He also noticed that his sandwich from the night before had disappeared and all that was left were a few crumbs on the plate.

“That’s funny,” he thought, “I don’t remember eating that last night. I was sure I left it. Oh well.”

He got up from the chair and began running his hands over the board again, feeling its beauty. He quickly got to work on glassing and finishing the board, and left it overnight to dry.

Two days later, a lone surfer wandered into the shop and began to look around.

“Giddyay,” he said when he saw Mike.

“Hi there,” Mike replied, looking at the young man and wrinkling his brow. He was sure he recognised him from somewhere.

“Haven’t been down to this part of town for ages,” said the young man. “I didn’t realise your shop was still open.”

“Yeah, still open,” sighed Mike. “But only just. One board left,” he said pointing at the shining new board that was now leaning against the wall.

The young man was immediately entranced by the surfboard. He walked over and began to run his hands down the rails, and turning the board around to see it from all sides.

“This is an amazing looking board mate,” he said. “Did you make it?”

Mike hesitated for a moment then said, “Yeah. Yeah, I did.” He looked again at the young man and said, “Do I know you?”

“Steve Nicholls,” replied the young man, holding out his hand. Mike shook it, trying hard to remember where he might have met Steve.

“I bought my first surfboard from you when I was just a 10-year-old grommet,” Steve said, helping him out.

“Now I’m doing my first year on the pro circuit.”

“Of course!” exclaimed Mike. “I saw you on TV a while ago. You were surfing really well!”

“Thanks mate,” Steve replied. “Listen, is this board for sale? I get free ones from my sponsor but this is one of the nicest looking boards I’ve ever seen.”

Mike was a little taken aback that Steve had just wandered into his shop and now wanted to buy this surprising board.

“Yeah, of course. As soon as I sell this one, I can buy a couple more blanks and get into those.”

Steve paid for the board and left the shop leaving Mike stunned but excited. He closed the shop, went straight to the bank and then on to the supermarket to buy himself something special for dinner. On the way back to the shop, he stopped by his supplier and bought two more blanks, and more fibreglass and resin. He packed them into his van and drove back to the shop in a very good mood.

That night, after his celebratory dinner, Mike went to bed early so that he would be rested and ready to work on the two new blanks in the morning. He couldn’t be bothered doing his dishes so he left his plate, with some uneaten food still on it, on the table.

Later that night, as Mike was sound asleep, the two elves came sniffing around his shop again, attracted by the smell of the leftovers from dinner. They squeezed in through the window and quickly fell to gobbling up the

yummy remnants of food. With full tummies and happy hearts, the elves soon noticed the two new blanks that were stacked on the floor. Their eyes lit up with excitement, out came their knives and away they went in a whirlwind of flying foam chips. When they had finished, the elves looked at each other, let out tinkling laughs and then ran to the window and off into the darkness.

Mike was up early the next morning, eager to work on the new boards. As he came down the stairs and into the shop, he was absolutely flabbergasted to find two beautifully shaped surfboards sitting on the racks in the middle of the shop. With mouth open and eyes popping, Mike lifted each board up to admire the curves and tucks, and the beautiful finish. If possible, they were even more magnificent than the previous board. It wasn't anything that Mike could really describe, it was just that the boards seemed somehow . . . magical! Out of the corner of his eye, Mike also noticed that his dinner plate was completely clean.

"That's weird," he thought. "I didn't rinse that last night. Curious."

Over the next couple of days, Mike carefully glassed and buffed the boards to a sparkling finish. He ran his hands over the boards again and again, trying to feel and see what made them so special. It was while he was deep in thought that there was a knock at the shop door and there, smiling through the window, was Steve Nicholls. He had a friend with him who Mike vaguely recognised as one of the local surfers. Mike quickly unlocked the door and let them in.

"Giddy Mike," Steve said cheerily.

"Morning," replied Mike, smiling but still with a slightly perplexed look on his face on account of the odd happenings in his shop.

"This is my mate Paul," Steve said, introducing his friend.

Mike shook Paul's hand and said, "Yeah, I think we've met down at the beach."

Steve began talking excitedly. "Mate, that board I bought from you just goes like a rocket! I've never surfed anything like it. It's, like, easily the best board I've ever ridden. You've just done a magical job on it!"

Mike was a little overwhelmed by Steve's enthusiasm but he managed to mutter, "Ahhh . . . thanks. Ah, yeah . . . good. Magic, eh?"

Now Paul chipped in. "You should have seen him Mike. He was all over the waves like you wouldn't believe. It was amazing! I was wondering if you could shape a board for me?"

Again, Mike was amazed but he replied, "Sure! Actually, I've just finished two new ones. Maybe you'd like one of those?" He pointed to the two new boards and let the two young men examine them. They began to chatter to each other about rails, concaves, mid-points and all sorts of other things, occasionally firing questions at Mike about how or why he done things on the surfboards. Mike answered as best he could.

"This is the most awesome board I have ever seen Mike," Paul said, holding up an orange one and rolling it over in his hands. "If it goes anything like Steve's did yesterday, I'll be stoked. I'll buy it!"

“Great!” smiled Mike.

“And I’m going to buy this one as well Mike,” announced Steve. “It’ll be perfect to take on the tour with me for when I have to surf bigger waves. I really like the bluey-green colour – sort of looks like the ocean itself.”

“Fantastic!” said Mike, thrilled that he had sold another two boards. Then the thrill wore off a bit when he remembered that it wasn’t him who had shaped them.

As soon as Steve and Paul had left, Mike went to the bank again, the supermarket (another celebratory dinner), his supplier (four blanks this time) and back to the shop.

For the rest of the afternoon, Mike sat looking at the blanks and sipping cups of tea. He really wanted to start on shaping a board but he was too intrigued by what had happened with the previous blanks to concentrate on the job. A plan was forming in his mind and, while he cooked his dinner, he decided what to do. Rather than going to bed that night, Mike hid under a blanket on the staircase and watched his shop to see if anything would happen to the four new blanks.

A few hours later, when nothing exciting had occurred, a tired and hungry Mike decided he would eat the chocolate bar that he had left on the table for his dessert. He was just about to go downstairs when he heard a rattle at the window in the back corner of the shop. Quick as lightning, the two elves ran to the table and, in front of Mike’s disbelieving eyes, ripped the wrapper off the chocolate bar and scoffed the lot. The next thing Mike saw was the glint of light on the two small knives just before the elves tore into the four blanks in a blur of limbs. He could not believe the speed and skill with which they worked and couldn’t bear to blink for fear of missing something. Before he knew it, the boards were finished and the backs of the two wee elves were disappearing through the window.

At first Mike thought that he must have been dreaming but there was the evidence right in front of his eyes – four exquisite new boards sitting on the racks.

When Mike opened the shop a few days later, it wasn’t long before Steve and Paul returned along with three of their friends. Three new boards were sold in no time and the fourth sold later that afternoon as word about Mike’s amazing surfboards began to spread.

That night, Mike set a trap. Up in the ceiling of the shop, he rigged an old fishing net and a system of ropes so that he could drop the net to the floor. He placed one of his super-tasty sandwiches on the table, then went back and hid under the blanket on the stairs with the release rope in his hand.

When the elves finally turned up, they went straight for the sandwich, just as Mike had expected. He let them get a couple of good mouthfuls in before releasing the rope. The elves were fast and nearly escaped the net but they got caught right on the edge and Mike dived on top of them to pin them down. They squealed and yelped, kicked and bit, but Mike wouldn’t let them get away. With his strong arms, he gathered them up in the net so that they were completely tangled, and then he waited for them to settle down.

When they were finally quiet, Mike said, "I want you to teach me to make surfboards like the ones you've been making here in my shop."

"Never!" they screamed. "Let us go!" And off they went into another shouting and screaming frenzy. When they had settled down again, Mike said, "If you don't teach me how, I'll keep you here forever and you'll have to make surfboards for me." He didn't mean it but he wanted the elves to think he did.

They looked very angry at that and muttered to each other. Finally, one of them said, "Never teach you but give you one wish if you let us go."

"Really?" exclaimed Mike. "One wish?"

"Yes but only if you let us out of net first," the elf answered.

"No way!" said Mike. "I've seen how fast you guys can move. You give me the wish first and then I'll let you go." There were more angry looks and muttering before the other elf replied, "Alright human. One wish and then you let us go. What is your wish?"

"I want you to teach me to make surfboards just like you do," said Mike smiling.

More muttering, then the first elf replied, "Very well, your wish is granted. Now remove this net!"

Mike untangled the elves from the net, excited at the prospect of learning the amazing skills they possessed. The moment they were free, both elves bolted for the window and were gone before Mike could even open his mouth to say, "Hey . . ."

For a few moments, Mike actually thought they might be coming back to keep their promise. Then it sunk in that the elves had grabbed their chance and run. They had no intention of returning and teaching him to shape surfboards. Mike slumped into his chair and felt disappointment overwhelm him. He knew they would never come back again and that meant no more magical surfboards.

"I shouldn't have trusted them," he thought. And he sat there cursing himself and his luck until he eventually fell asleep right there in the chair.

When Mike awoke in the morning he stretched and got out of the chair, and was immediately confronted by eight new blanks that awaited shaping. The sleep had done him some good and he said out loud to himself, "I can do this. I've made boards all my life. I don't need stupid elves to do it for me."

A short time later, as he prepared to start work, a group of excited surfers gathered outside the shop, eager to buy one of the amazing boards that everyone was talking about. Mike opened the door and said, "Sorry boys, I'm working today. Come back in a couple of days and I'll have new boards ready."

When the disappointed surfers had left, Mike plugged in all his shaping equipment and got ready to go to work on the first blank. He checked it from all angles, flipped it over a couple of times, and put on his goggles and earmuffs. He even revved up his electric plane but no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't make the first cut. All day he looked at those blanks and, time and again, he tried to make a start on even one surfboard. However, he found he was simply unable to do it.

By late afternoon, Mike was frustrated and angry. He felt betrayed by the elves and worried that all his skills and confidence had deserted him. He wondered how he would survive if he couldn't make surfboards anymore. Mike went upstairs and fell onto his bed to ponder his difficulties but fell into a deep sleep.

It was dark when he woke up but Mike felt strangely refreshed. He looked at the clock – 11pm!

“Wow! I slept for six hours,” he muttered.

When he went downstairs, food was on his mind but the moment he saw the surfboard blanks, he was taken by a passion. He suddenly knew absolutely what he wanted to do with them. He picked up his electric plane but it felt awkward and clunky in his hand. He quickly put it down again and looked around the room, his eye coming to rest on the carving knife in the kitchen.

Mike quickly sharpened the knife and then fell to work on the first blank. To him it seemed that he worked at a normal speed but anyone standing in the room that night would have seen him only as a blur with foam flying in all directions.

As the sun rose, Mike stood in front of eight superb new surfboards, and he grinned when he saw how good his work was. As he dusted himself off and looked at the new boards, he saw the same magic that he had seen in the boards the elves had made. There was an unexplained quality about them that made Mike realise that the elves hadn't betrayed him after all. They had passed their skills on to him, all in one magical instant that he hadn't even felt, and he was now the shaper he had wished to be.

Mike was suddenly very tired and felt he couldn't shape another board if he tried. He didn't even have any good ideas for another board. That was when he also realised that, now he was an elf-trained surfboard maker, he could only work at night. This didn't worry Mike much and he managed to stay awake long enough to open the shop for the group of surfers who arrived that morning. They almost fought each other to buy the eight surfboards and those who missed out left orders with Mike for another sixteen boards.

“Looks like I'm going to be busy for a while,” thought Mike as he flopped into a chair at lunch time. The last thing Mike did before he went to sleep for the rest of the afternoon was to prop the back window open a little and leave a plate of 'thank you' pizza on the windowsill – and it was all gone by morning.

4. The Fire Emerald

Eustace Trimmer loved to surf – oh boy, how he loved to surf! He'd surf every day if he could. And amazingly, on Patootle Island, he could! There were always waves rolling in and the wind was always blowing offshore somewhere around the island.

Eustace had been teased a lot when he was at school because he was didn't grow up as fast as the other boys and he was not very good at sports. No-one would pick him to be on their teams and they would all call him "Useless" instead of Eustace. It was a miserable time but when Eustace finally left school, he suddenly grew tall and strong as if his body had just been waiting to get out into the real world. He discovered and fell in love with surfing, and decided to become the best surfer on the whole of Patootle Island. He wanted to make sure that no-one would call him Useless again.

The other thing that Eustace loved was Sophie – Princess Sophie, in fact. Yes, Patootle Island had its very own royal family, the most mesmerising member of which, in Eustace's opinion, was Princess Sophie. She had long purple and blue hair, loads of black eyeliner, ten piercings in her left ear, five in her right, two in her nose and one in each of her lips which were usually covered in a different coloured lipstick each day. She was a punk princess but she was really just a big softy who liked to dress like a playground bully.

Eustace was nowhere near as outlandish as Sophie in his appearance but he did have a knack for wearing quirky clothes that didn't match, even though he thought they did. He looked at himself in the mirror that morning and nodded with approval at his red trousers, orange shirt, polka-dotted jacket and straw hat. The hat helped keep his unruly sand-coloured hair in place and the orange shirt somehow brought out the green in his eyes. His rosy cheeks glowed as he gave a toothy smile and said to his reflection, "Nice day to propose marriage."

Eustace had been dating Sophie for more than a year but he had been over the moon about her since they were at school together. Sophie, however, had only noticed Eustace when he grew up and started surfing so well at the beach. They were in classes together at university now and were the best of friends, and Eustace was thinking about taking the next step.

The truth is that Eustace was worried Sophie might say no when he asked her to marry him, not because he doubted she loved him but because she was such a rebel and hated doing what people expected her to. However, when Eustace got down on his one red-clad knee and begged for her hand in marriage, Sophie jumped and shouted, "Yes please! Yes, yes, yes!" They hugged and kissed and got all excited.

"But you know what that means, don't you?" Sophie asked with a sudden worried look on her pierced face. "If you want to marry me, you have to bring back the Fire Emerald from Cascade Bay."

It was a well-known legend on Patootle Island that a prince or princess could only get married if they swore their love by the power of the royal sceptre. But the royal sceptre was missing its crowning glory, the Fire Emerald,

which was stolen 20 years ago and hidden inside the eternal wave of Cascade Bay.

After Sophie's father, King Edgar Grizzleface, had married Sophie's mother, a jealous rival had stolen the Fire Emerald in the hope that no child of the king and queen could ever get married again, and their royal line would die out. Many brave men and women had tried to retrieve the Fire Emerald for the king but none had succeeded and few had survived. Without the Fire Emerald, the sceptre was not considered complete and no royal weddings could take place without it.

"You have to get the Fire Emerald or we can't get married," Sophie sniffled, a few small tears beginning to form in her eyes. Then she remembered she was a punk princess and quickly straightened herself up, dabbing at her running mascara.

Putting on his most grown up face, Eustace stood tall and looked sternly at Sophie.

"I understand that Sophie and that is why I intend to go to Cascade Bay and retrieve the Fire Emerald. They called me "Useless" at school but I'm going to prove that I'm not by bringing the emerald back and winning your hand in marriage."

Eustace removed his hat with a flourish and bowed to Sophie causing a small cascade of sand to fall to the floor from his salty hair.

"Ohhh, that's so cuuuute!" Sophie cooed but then quickly coughed and remembered she was meant to be a bit more punk than that.

"Wait here," she called, and she ran off to her room in the castle.

Eustace could hear a lot of rummaging and crashing in the distance but soon Sophie returned holding a long piece of wood.

"This is a model of the sceptre I made for a school project a few years ago. It's not very good and the emerald is just a big green marble held on with chewing gum, but it will give you an idea of what the sceptre looks like, and it can be my good luck charm for you on your quest." Sophie handed the model sceptre to Eustace who looked it over carefully then held it above Sophie's head and said, "I now pronounce us man and wife."

Sophie let out a small laugh but then she said, "I'm scared Eustace. A lot of people have died trying to retrieve the Fire Emerald."

Eustace hugged her and said, "I'm scared too but I love you and I want to marry you so I'm sure I'll figure something out and come back victorious . . . and hopefully not die in the attempt."

He laughed out loud and as bravely as he could, hugged Sophie again and left for home to formulate his plan.

One week later, Eustace found himself floating in a boat, looking at the huge waterfall that surged down the mountain-side and crashed into the waters of Cascade Bay, forming the eternal wave. The waterfall must have been at least 100 metres tall, and the power of its journey and collision with the ocean filled Cascade Bay with swirling mist.

Eustace's friend, Dash Swiftly, was the only one who had been brave enough to join him on the dangerous quest. Dash sat in the skipper's seat looking up at the clouds that hid the top of the mountains that surrounded Cascade Bay and he sighed contentedly. Dash only ever wore white and tended to float around rather like a cloud – or with his head in the clouds at least. Today, he was wearing white jeans, white t-shirt, white tennis shoes and a white peak cap. He was tall and gangly, and had wispy pale blond hair and light blue eyes. Looking at Dash was rather like looking at the sky on a fluffy-cloud summer day.

"They say that it never stops raining up there," Dash called over the sound of the booming water.

"So they say," Eustace muttered, looking up at the clouds. "That's why the waterfall never stops and the wave at the bottom is . . . well . . . eternal," he shouted.

They both looked across the bay to where the surging water hit a curved rock face at an enormous speed, shot up it's steep slope and peeled over into a towering barrel of water. Round and round Cascade Bay the water swirled, being sucked back into and over the wave repeatedly at a frightening speed.

Eustace watched as a large branch floated past the boat. It was quickly pulled into the energy of the wave and spat over and out in a split second, shattering into pieces as it hit the water again.

It was only by keeping the motor running that the boat wasn't eaten up by the monster wave. Dash looked at Eustace and saw the terror in his eyes.

"We can always go back," he shouted. "Say you tried but couldn't get it, and just be girlfriend and boyfriend forever. No shame in that."

Eustace looked back again at the eternal wave. It was very tempting to give up and go home. Sophie would understand if she had been there and looked at that snarling wall of water. But then, in the back of his mind, he could hear the kids at school chanting, 'Useless, Useless, Useless,' and he immediately swallowed his fear and resolved to give it a try.

He turned back to Dash and shouted, "But I really love Sophie and I really want to get married. We have to find a way to get that emerald."

Dash laughed and called back, "You big softie!"

He drove the boat far enough out of Cascade Bay so that they could talk to each other without shouting.

"Do we even know the emerald is in there?" Dash asked.

"It has to be," replied Eustace. "I mean, who could get it out?"

They both laughed at the seemingly hopeless situation they were in.

"How did this rival of the King get it in there in the first place," Dash asked. "I mean, who would even think of trying to hide an emerald inside a wave like that?"

"Apparently, the volcano right at the top of the mountain erupted and blew all the clouds away for several months. The waterfall dried up and so did the wave. He simply walked in and popped it in a little alcove in the rock. Soon after, the clouds returned and it began to rain again on the mountain. By the time anyone realised

what he had done, the waterfall was back and so was the eternal wave. There hasn't been a dry day since." Eustace sighed as he looked again at the fierce beauty of Cascade Bay with its surrounding walls of dark green jungle. Dash stood up and stretched his long limbs and announced, "There's only one way I can see it happening Eustace. We tow you into the wave using the new surfboard you shaped. I'll accelerate as fast as I can into the bay, circle around and catapult you into the wave with enough speed to get you into the tube. Then you surf deeper and deeper into the tube until you find the Fire Emerald and bring it back. Simple." Dash smiled, his whiter-than-white teeth shining in the sun.

Eustace just laughed.

"It seemed like a good plan when we made the board but now I think I'll just get eaten alive by that wave the moment I get anywhere near it!"

"Possible," Dash smiled "but look at this board Eustace. It's smooth, it's fast, it's light and, best of all, it's white! Nobody else has succeeded but nobody else has tried surfing to success, so try it out and see how it feels. This could be your destiny."

Eustace couldn't understand why such an insane scheme seemed OK but, suddenly, it did seem to make sense and Eustace really felt a glimmer of hope.

"OK wise-guy, I'll give it a go. Pass me my good luck charm and let's get started."

Dash passed him the pretend sceptre that Sophie had given him and Eustace went to tuck it into the pocket on the back of his life jacket, but just as he did so, the green marble on the top, fell off and plopped into the water. Eustace watched as it fell from view into the swirling depths.

"Well, that's a good start for a lucky charm," Dash announced, still peering over the side at the disappearing marble.

"Thanks Dash, that really helps my confidence," Eustace replied sarcastically.

Dash just shrugged, gave Eustace a goofy smile and said, "Come on, get your gear on and get over the side. We'll try this baby out."

With that he flipped the surfboard over the side of the boat and, within minutes, Dash was racing the boat around just outside Cascade Bay with Eustace in tow. Eustace quickly found that the new surfboard was very fast, and easy to turn and control. Eustace checked that what was left of his lucky charm was secure in the back his life jacket, and then gave Dash the signal to launch him into the wave.

His heart began to thump in his chest as they circled the bay and approached the wave at top speed. Dash looked like he was about to drive the whole boat into the wave but, at the last moment, veered away and shot Eustace, like a pebble out of a slingshot, into the gaping, watery cave of the eternal wave. The noise was overwhelming but Eustace concentrated on timing his turn so that as soon as his speed from the boat slowed, he would pick up the speed of the wave. He was amazed at how quickly his new surfboard raced into the howling blue pit. As soon as he felt the board slow up, he leaned back and carved a giant turn across the face of the wave so that he was

now surfing back down the face and back towards the boat in the distance. But the incredible speed of the water rushing up the face of the wave surprised him and Eustace found himself being sucked up towards the pitching roof of water. He cried out and leaned all his weight forward on the surfboard and just managed to avoid disaster, edging his way back down the hurtling wave.

Eustace was surrounded by spray and deafening noise but he focussed on the water surface that raced beneath the board and slowly got the feel of the wave, edging himself gradually further back into the roaring barrel of water. The further back inside the tube he rode, the steeper the wall of water became and the greater the danger of being sucked over and smashed to pieces. The beautiful hollow, whooshing sound of being in the barrel of a wave was amplified a hundred times and was so impressive that Eustace was both excited and terrified at the same time. He edged further and further back into the barrel, all the time fine tuning his weight on the surfboard so that he kept flying down the face but slowly crept deeper into the churning watery cave. Soon, the exit of the giant tube was a small oval in the distance and Dash in the boat, a mere white speck beyond that. Eustace risked a look back and was surprised to see that the rocky wall where the emerald was supposed to be hidden was almost within reach. And there, its beautiful green sparkle visible between bursts of water and foam, was the Fire Emerald, glittering in a small alcove, just like the legend said.

Eustace eased back on the board a bit more to try and get closer but he suddenly felt its edge twitch and he knew that he was perilously close to losing control and being gobbled up by the wave. He eased off just a little again but immediately had to readjust in order not to be picked up and killed. Eustace was fast becoming tired and frustrated because he couldn't think of a way to get back that last little bit that would allow him to reach out and grab the Fire Emerald. Then he suddenly remembered his good luck charm. He carefully reached back and pulled it from the pocket of his life jacket. He looked it over quickly, without losing concentration on his surfing, and knew immediately that it was good luck after all. Carefully, he picked the chewing gum off the top of the long piece of wood, popped it into his mouth and began to soften it up again. It tasted a bit stale but wasn't too bad and, although he was ashamed to admit it, reminded him just a little bit of kissing Sophie. He had to be quick because he was getting very tired so, popping the gum from his mouth, he stuck it to the top of the sceptre again. Then holding the sceptre with his back arm, he stretched as far as he could and, risking a quick glance backwards, prodded at the alcove where the Fire Emerald lay hidden, hoping to make the emerald stick to the chewing gum. He twitched at the last moment and missed, nearly losing control of his surfboard. Eustace readjusted everything and, using his fading strength, stretched again and prodded once more at the alcove. This time he got it! The Fire Emerald stuck with a satisfying squelch to the chewing gum and sat atop the sceptre, twinkling at him.

Eustace was so tired now from all the effort of trying to ride the watery monster that his legs were beginning to wobble. He threw all his weight forward on the board and began to ride back towards the distant opening to this incredible tube. He crouched low on the board, resting one hand on the front and urging himself on towards

the watery exit. The wave was like a live monster, all noise, spray and movement, that sensed it might be able to consume Eustace before he reached his goal. But finally, with his strength fading completely, Eustace burst from the heaving barrel out onto the face of the wave. He was ecstatic but had no energy left and thought he was about to fall when he saw a small branch drifting rapidly towards him. Attached to it was a rope and attached to that was the boat with Dash sitting in the skipper's seat grinning. Eustace crouched down, grabbed hold of the branch and felt the boat start towing him to safety.

His tired legs crumpled beneath him and he quickly lay down on the board. He looked up at Dash and saw his fist punching the air above him, and Eustace suddenly let go a long loud, "Yahoooooooo" of his own. He got a shock when he realised that he was completely deaf from the journey into the roaring tube but he yahoo-ed again anyway. Dash turned to look at him and Eustace could see he was laughing his head off as he towed him out of the bay. Eustace held the Fire Emerald up high for Dash to see and, as the sun caught it, a green flash shot out across Cascade Bay towards the surrounding forest. Eustace laughed too as he held the emerald higher but he got a surprise when the look on Dash's face suddenly changed to fear. He was shouting but Eustace was still deaf so he turned to look behind him at the place Dash was frantically pointing to. As he turned, his arm fell back to his side – just in time to avoid being ripped off by a giant colourful bird that had swept down from the mountainside, attracted by the brilliant green flash of the Fire Emerald. If Eustace hadn't been deaf already, the piercing squawk that the bird let out as it flew past would have split his ears. He watched as the mighty creature circled around and plummeted back towards him, vicious talons extended and rainbow plumage shivering with the speed of the dive. Its large beady eyes sized him up and another screech escaped from the razor-sharp beak. At the last moment, Eustace let go of the tow rope and flipped himself and the board over, looking for protection under water. He felt a crash and tearing sensation as the bird's raking claws and beak plunged through the foam and fibreglass of the board, and skimmed past Eustace's face. With a surfboard firmly wedged onto its claws, the enormous bird struggled back into the air where it wheeled and circled, looking like it was surfing on air and trying desperately to free itself of the nasty attachment. As Eustace surfaced, he looked up just in time to see the bird veer away and release a piercing shriek of frustration as it flew a wobbly path back towards the thick forest. Exhaustion overtook Eustace and he simply lay back and floated until Dash came and picked him up. He could scarcely drag himself into the boat but with Dash's help, he was soon aboard where he flopped into a seat and couldn't get up again.

"Pity about the surfboard," sighed Eustace, hardly able to keep his eyes open. "That was a great board." And then he fell asleep with the Fire Emerald still gripped tightly in his fist.

Eustace Trimmer and Princess Sophie were married two weeks later in a romantic ceremony on the beach, right in front of the castle. To celebrate his success in recovering the Fire Emerald, Eustace wore an emerald green

velvet jacket with tails, bright pink trousers and a tartan shirt. He had a top hat specially made that was covered with purple silk and had a red polka dotted ribbon tied around it. He and Sophie both wore bare feet.

Sophie wore a very simple but elegant blood-red satin dress and she dyed her hair dark red to match. She also sported a brand new tattoo on her right shoulder that showed Eustace surfing deep inside the eternal wave of Cascade Bay, and just below it was a heart with "Eustace" written inside.

Dash was the best man and he wore white of course – white shirt, suit, socks, shoes and hat, even gloves! Sophie didn't have any bridesmaids because she just wanted to be different. The King and Queen both cried their eyes out because they were so happy Sophie was getting married and in the hope they might finally have some grandchildren to love.

Everyone on the island was invited to the wedding and they lined the beach and the surrounding cliffs, cheering wildly when the King and Queen raised the royal sceptre above the couple to bless the marriage. The setting sun caught the Fire Emerald and cast a beautiful green light over the beach. Everyone cheered again and began to chant, "Eustace, Sophie, Eustace, Sophie." Eustace smiled and said to himself, "Not Useless, no sir."

Sophie and Eustace stayed in love forever and had four boys, all of whom learned to surf. They also had a daughter named Emerald who chose to be a bodysurfer because she just felt like being different.

5. Mini-surf

Wizard Whacko was sitting at the Moonlight Bay café reading the newspaper, and enjoying a nice hot cup of coffee and a doughnut, when two local surfers, Nick and Zane, sat down at the table next to him. He couldn't help but overhear their conversation about the surf.

'I can't believe it's flat again,' said Nick.

'Yeah, that's like four weeks in a row,' groaned Zane. 'It's just not fair.'

'Oh well,' pondered Nick, 'at least we've got a day off work and it's beautiful and sunny. Can't complain too much.'

Now Wizard Whacko liked people with a positive attitude so he wondered if he could do something to help out Nick and Zane. Then he heard Zane say, 'Check out those great little peelers in the middle of the beach Nick. Imagine if we were three inches tall – they'd be perfect!'

'Yeah, wouldn't that be cool,' Nick replied, eyeing up the perfect six-inch waves breaking on the beach.

Wizard Whacko decided to test the two boys out. He leaned over and said, 'I like your attitude boys. I think I can help you. Do you believe in magic?'

Now most boys of Nick and Zane's age would have laughed in his face and told him to buzz off, but Nick and Zane thought the ability to surf was a bit magical anyway.

Nick looked at Wizard Whacko and got a strange feeling that this man really was special. 'I guess I do . . . I'm not quite sure,' Nick replied.

'Well, if you're interested in finding out,' Wizard Whacko said mysteriously, 'go home and get your surfboards and then meet me down on the beach in 20 minutes.'

Nick and Zane looked at each other and shrugged.

'Why not?' said Zane. 'If nothing else, we can go for a paddle and keep fit.'

So the boys went home, gathered their surfboards and, twenty minutes later, met Wizard Whacko on the beach.

The boys looked at Wizard Whacko expectantly, taking in his tattered old white trousers and grubby white shirt, his frizzy long white hair and beard, all offset by his brown, leathery skin. Below the rolled cuffs of his trousers were battered old jandals which Wizard Whacko now removed and held carefully in his hands.

'OK lads, this is tricky magic, even for a clever wizard like me. Once I've done it, you'll only have an hour to enjoy yourselves, and I'll have to have a little rest to recover.'

'Okaaay . . .' replied Nick tentatively. Both boys were a little uncertain but hoped that Wizard Whacko was somehow going to make big waves start rolling in at the beach. They watched the horizon for the first big sets while Wizard Whacko began to mutter magical words and wave his jandals around above his head. After 30 seconds of magical mutterings, the boys got a sudden fright when Wizard Whacko smacked his jandals together loudly.

They got another fright when they realized that Wizard Whacko had doubled in height right in front of their eyes. He smacked his jandals together again and doubled in height again! It was incredible – the boys couldn't believe their eyes! Wizard Whacko smacked his jandals together several more times so that when he had finished, the boys were no taller than his ankle.

Wizard Whacko bent down close to the boys and said, 'There you go then. Are you ready to surf?'

Nick and Zane were completely confused.

'But how is making yourself a giant going to help us surf,' Zane shouted up to him.

Wizard Whacko laughed, a great booming noise to the boys' ears.

'It's not me who has gotten bigger – it's you two who have shrunk,' he said and laughed again.

Sure enough, when Nick looked around, everything had become huge and distant. This scared him a little to begin with but then he looked down at the ocean and saw that the perfect six-inch waves they had been admiring in the morning were now double-overhead and perfect for three-inch surfers. He looked at Zane and said, 'This is the weirdest thing ever but check out those waves!'

Zane looked at the perfect breakers, let out a loud hoot and shouted, 'Woohoo! Let's hit it!'

Wizard Whacko smiled then gently lifted the boys up, walked down the beach and lowered them into the water.

'Have fun guys but, remember, it only lasts an hour so make the most of it. I'm going to have a little snooze here on the beach while you enjoy yourselves.'

Both miniscule voices squeaked back at him, 'Thanks. See you in an hour.' And they happily paddled off into the beautiful secluded surf.

Wizard Whacko was exhausted after such difficult magic, so he moved back up the beach a short way, made himself a little pillow of sand, placed his jandals carefully next to him, and settled in for a nice snooze.

'Ahh, just what I need . . .' he sighed as he dozed off.

Meanwhile, Nick and Zane were having their most memorable surf ever.

'When have we ever surfed out here with nobody else out Zane,' Nick asked, laughing with the joy of it.

'Never!' replied Zane. 'And certainly not when the waves have been this good!'

And with that, they both paddled into another perfect set of waves beneath a perfect blue sky and golden sunlight. Anyone walking along the beach may have noticed curious little tracks racing over the tiny waves rolling into the beach that day, but only if they had gotten into the water up to their knees would they have had the shock of seeing three-inch-tall Nick and Zane tearing up the tiny waves.

Some time later, Wizard Whacko awoke, sat up, rubbed his eyes, scratched his sandy head and looked around with a puzzled look on his face.

'What am I doing here?' he said to himself. Wizard Whacko was a forgetful old wizard sometimes, particularly after he had just done some difficult magic. He looked around again, shrugged his shoulders then slowly got to

his feet, dusting the sand off as he went. He stretched and then bent down to pick up his sandals which had a light coating of sand on them. He slapped them together twice to knock the sand off and then looked up and down the beach trying to remember why he was there.

Out in the water, Nick was flying across the face of a beautiful big wave and, behind him, Zane was paddling hard for a set wave. Neither of them heard Wizard Whacko slap his jandals together but they both immediately felt the effects. With one slap of the jandals, Nick suddenly found himself bottom turning on a watery wall that had jumped to four times his height and then, just as suddenly, eight times his height as Wizard Whacko slapped his jandals the second time!

Zane had just got to his feet and suddenly found himself racing down the hugest slab of water he had ever seen. The drop went on forever as Zane shrunk once and then twice. He looked above him and saw a huge avalanche of breaking water heading his way so he carefully drew into an enormous drawn-out bottom turn and just managed to sneak around the wash pummeling down from above. Looking ahead, Zane felt like he was riding a moving blue mountain but one that was determined to try and crush him at the first opportunity.

Nick was having the same problem; his top turn had just left him with a huge freefall down the face and he had barely survived. Now the wave was speeding up as it approached the beach and all Nick could do was crouch low, point his board towards freedom and nervously thrill himself as he entered the tubing cavern of water that overtook him. The noise was incredible and Nick couldn't help thinking that there was room for another six surfers in there with him if anyone brave enough could be found.

Finally, the watery beast got tired and slowed down, allowing Nick to shoot out of the tube and over the back of the wave to safety. As he lowered himself to his board, he looked back to see Zane stuck in a howling tube, just as Nick had been, and he couldn't help laughing at the look on Zane's face – a mix of overwhelming excitement and fear, mouth wide open and shouting, and eyes bugging out of his head.

When Zane had managed to escape his wave and join Nick, he panted, 'That was amazing! Scary . . . but amazing. What happened?! One second I was on a normal-sized wave and then all of a sudden I was surfing for my life on a monster of the deep!'

'Don't know Zane,' Nick replied, 'but I'm guessing that old bloke smacked his jandals together a couple more times and made us shrink even more.'

Nick looked towards the beach and saw Wizard Whacko standing there looking confused. 'He must have forgotten about us. We better try and get ashore before he accidentally shrinks us some more.'

Just as both boys began to paddle for shore, a fly suddenly pestered Wizard Whacko. It buzzed his nose, then his mouth and then his ear.

'Get out of it you little rascal,' Wizard Whacko cursed as he waved his arms around trying to shoo it away. But the fly was determined and kept pestering him until, for a moment, it hovered in front of Wizard Whacko's face,

laughing at him. As he still had his jandals in his hands, Wizard Whacko smacked them together in an attempt to squash the fly, missing once but succeeding on his second attempt. He muttered to himself, wiped his fly-spattered jandals on the sand, and then slipped them on his feet.

Out in the water, disaster struck. With the first slap, Nick and Zane dropped to half their previous size and suddenly doubled the paddling distance to shore. With the second slap, they nearly disappeared from sight and found that every ripple on the water was now a full-sized wave that threatened to bowl them off their boards.

‘Oh man, we are in so much trouble,’ Nick called to Zane.

‘We’ll just have to ride whatever comes along and see if we can get safely back to shore,’ Zane replied.

Both boys paddled harder than they ever had before, heads down, arms pulling desperately at the water, striving to reach the distant shore. However, things got nasty when a hungry snapper that was looking for some lunch, happened to see Nick and Zane’s arms paddling in the water, and thought, ‘Yum, yum!’ It made a lunge for the boys just as they both took off on a handy ripple, and only missed nipping their arms off by a hair’s width. The mighty splash and the flash of silver made the boys’ hearts leap with fear and they thought their end was near. As the ripple beneath them faded away and they slid to a halt, neither wanted to put their arms or legs into the water. They lay on their boards with hands and feet above the water, but the hungry snapper had spotted them again and was closing in for its meal.

If that snapper had known how to tell the time, it would have seen Zane’s watch flick to 11.17am and it may not have lunged for him quite the way it did. But we all know that snapper can’t tell the time so it flicked its tail hard and accelerated towards its meal of two microscopic surfers. At the moment that 11.17am struck, however, Wizard Whacko’s spell wore off and, faster than you can blink, in a series of explosive leaps in size, the two boys returned to their normal selves.

‘Ow!’ Nick yelled as the leaping snapper whacked into his head.

The poor dazed and confused fish swam slowly off into the distance, leaving the boys to look once at each other and then burst out in relieved laughter.

‘That was soooo weird,’ Zane laughed.

‘Weird, scary, exciting . . . WEIRD!’ agreed Nick, and then they both laughed long and hard again as they picked up their boards and walked from the water.

As they strolled up the beach, Wizard Whacko saw them and said, ‘Hello boys. You look familiar . . . where have I seen you before?’

Nick smiled and replied, ‘Never mind. Why don’t you head home and have a rest and you might remember later on.’

‘Good idea,’ smiled Wizard Whacko. ‘How was the surf? It looks a bit small.’

Zane and Nick laughed, and Zane replied, ‘Yeah but it’s deceptive. We got some pretty big ones.’

‘Hmmm . . . ,’ muttered Wizard Whacko as meandered back up the beach.

As Nick and Zane wandered back home, Nick said, ‘Maybe we could get him to make us super light next time and we could go surfing in the clouds.’

Zane smiled and looked up at the passing clouds. ‘Yeah, maybe . . .’

6. The Kraken of Moonlight Bay

Katie and her friends had been watching the lazy swell roll in for a whole month but the wind just wouldn't change to offshore to produce the frisky, feathering waves they all loved. It was very frustrating!

They tried getting up early in the morning but, even though the wind was lighter for a short time, it soon began to huff and puff, groan and moan and mess up the lovely swell lines. Finally, at the end of the week, as a buttery full moon was rising out of the ocean, Katie had an idea. She texted her friend Molly, "Full moon 2nite. Meet my place after dinr and we surf at midnight".

Molly texted back, "R u serious?! 2 dark n scary".

But Katie wasn't going to give up that easily.

"Full moon so plenty of light, no wind, waves at last! Miles says yes".

Then Katie quickly sent a text to Miles to say that she and Molly were going midnight surfing and he should join them.

Miles replied, "What! R u nuts?! What about sharks?".

Katie replied, "Don't be chicken. If we can do it, u can".

Meanwhile, Molly has sent back a text saying, "OK, if u n Miles r thr. Must b mad".

"Yessss!" cried Katie, pumping a fist.

Then, sure enough, Miles sent back a text to say that he would be there too and, after a bit more texting, she had convinced her friend Nick to join them as well.

They met at Katie's house after dinner, and walked down to Moonlight Bay to sit in the dunes and watch the moonlit waves. They lay back on the sand with their boards and wetsuits scattered around them, enjoying the beauty of the sparkly moon trail on the water and the giggling stars above.

"Feel that," Katie said, holding a hand up in the air. "The wind is dying off."

Everyone held up a hand and agreed that the wind was dying.

"You know why they call this Moonlight Bay, don't you?" Katie asked the others. "Because on nights like this, with the full moon, it reflects off the white cliffs at each end of the bay and lights the bay like a stadium. In the old days, people used to row around the bay on the full moon and have rowboat parties. I'm surprised we hadn't thought about night surfing before."

"Ahhh . . . maybe because it's super-spooky," suggested Miles.

"Yeah, and they probably didn't have rowboat parties when the surf was up like it is tonight," Molly added.

"Sure but look how light it is now and how nice the waves are," Katie replied. "C'mon. Let's get out there!"

The four of them suited up, grabbed their boards and waded into the inky-dark ocean. Just as they broke through the shore break and began to paddle towards the sandbar where the waves were at their best, there was a mighty

splash and bubbling surge of water through the wave peaking up in the distance.

“Holey moley Katie, what was that?!” shouted Nick.

“That was huge!” shrieked Molly.

“That was a shark for sure!” Miles yelled. “I’m out of here!” he said, and he turned and started paddling back to shore as fast as he could go.

“Oh, come on guys . . .” Katie pleaded. “It might have just been a kingfish or something. Don’t such a bunch of scaredy cats.”

“I’m out of here too,” announced Molly. “This is way too spooky,” and she too turned and paddled quickly towards the beach.

Katie looked at Nick who glanced at the others paddling towards the beach and then back out to where a perfect set was peaking up over the sandbar.

“Oh, what the heck. Come on then Katie, let’s go out and catch some of those waves.”

“Good on you Nick!” Katie cried, and they both paddled hard towards the glittering silver waves that ebbed and flowed in the moonlight.

They reached the bar and started catching some great waves, hooting each other into the sets, amazed at how easy it was to see with the milky glow of the full moon and the reflection off the nearby cliffs.

Nick and Katie were sitting on their boards and chatting, waiting for the next set, when there was a sudden, enormous splash close by, and then a heave and pulse in the water beneath them that lifted them up and dropped them down again before disappearing.

Nick looked at Katie, opened his mouth and screamed.

“Arrrrrrrrrrrr . . . let’s get out of here!” He flipped his board around and began to head for the shore, his arms a whirlwind of activity. Katie was about to follow him but, as she glanced back seaward, she saw another perfect set lining up on the bar and, curiously, a flicker of pink, blue and green light beneath the water of the first wave.

‘Catching a wave will probably help me get in faster anyway,’ she thought, so she paddled towards the peaking waves and prepared to catch the largest wave of the set.

Katie paddled hard to get herself sliding down the face of a sparkling night wave, then jumped to her feet, eased into a bottom turn and eyed up the wall of water ahead of her. Just as she was about to lean into a cutback, a giant greeny-blue tentacle burst out of the water next to her, wrapped itself around her middle and lifted her high into the air, her board dangling below her at the end of her legrope. Katie screamed so loud she thought her lungs would burst.

As the wave left her behind, another tentacle slithered out of the water below her, curled around her surfboard and held that aloft as well. Then, slowly, a huge, squid-like body rose to the surface of the water and two enormous black-jelly eyes, the size of dinner plates, stared at Katie. She stared back, so scared she couldn’t even scream again. Small tufts of seaweed and clumps of barnacles clung to the creature’s body, and it had at least a

dozen tentacles of different lengths curling, creeping and sliding in and out of the water surrounding it. Multi-coloured flashes of light raced up and down the long, sleek body, and then made swirling patterns all over its skin. It was like a message in light but Katie couldn't understand what it was saying.

"Could you put me down please?" Katie said in a quiet, quivering voice.

To her surprise, the tentacles slithered back into the water and gently released her onto the surface.

"Can you understand what I'm saying?" Katie asked.

From within the creature came a deep, rumbling that went on for a few seconds before finally resolving into a drawn out, throaty, "Yesssssss". This was followed by a great sigh of fishy-smelling air and water, followed by more echoing words.

"Whaaaaat are you doooooing . . . in my bay . . . at . . . niight?"

It was like listening to a cross between a vacuum cleaner and a deep voice echoing in a cave, and Katie was so shocked, she had trouble coming up with an answer.

"I . . . I . . . I . . ."

"I doooon't . . . understaaaaand you," wheezed the creature.

"Sorry," Katie said. "I'm just a little shocked at being grabbed by a giant squid in the middle of the ocean in the middle of the night."

"I'm a kraken, not a squid," said the creature, starting to get used to speaking human language, "and it's not the middle of the ocean, it's just my bay."

"Well Mr Kraken, my friends and I are out here because we wanted to use the light of the full moon to see the waves. We're out here surfing," Katie said.

"There's only you," the kraken said, "The others have gone back to the beach."

Katie laughed a moment but then felt scared for doing so. "Yes, you scared them off."

There was another wheeze and snuffle of fishy air and water, and Katie wondered if the kraken was laughing.

"What is surfing?" the kraken asked.

"That's when you use the power of a wave to make this board" – Katie pointed at her surfboard – "glide over the surface of the water until the wave runs out of power or you fall off."

"Hmmm," rumbled the kraken, "I don't have a board but I too use the power of the waves to ride along under the water."

"Oh yes," cried Katie, "we call that bodysurfing. I like to do that too."

"I've never seen anyone out 'surfing' at night before," the kraken said. "I always have the bay to myself at night."

"We normally only surf during the day Mr Kraken, but the wind has been ruining the surf for us so we decided to try surfing by the light of the full moon, when the wind had died down. This is the first time we've tried it," Katie said.

“I have perhaps given you a bit of a surprise then,” the kraken said, followed by another wheezy sigh. Katie was sure this time that it was him laughing.

“Yes, a very big surprise,” Katie chuckled. “Where do you live Mr Kraken? I’ve never seen you during the day.”

“I live in a very deep underwater cave not far from here but I only ever come out at night. The sun is too harsh on my eyes and skin so I normally sleep during the day.”

“But you like to surf the waves at night?” Katie asked.

“Ooooooh yes!” rumbled the kraken. “It’s one of my favourite things to do. Shall we ‘surf’ some waves together now?”

“I would love to, but . . .” Katie looked up and saw that clouds had covered the moon, “. . . it’s too dark for me to see properly now so I can’t catch the waves.”

The kraken let out another fishy, wheezy laugh and said, “That’s easily solved . . . what’s your name surfing girl?”

“Katie,” Katie replied.

“Well Katie, I have a couple of clever tricks I can perform, one of which is called bioluminescence which is just a fancy word for glowing in the dark. I’ll swim along underneath you and light up the waves, and we can surf them together.”

“OK,” replied Katie, not quite sure that would work. “I’ll do my best.”

She got back on her board, and began to paddle towards the peaking waves although it was a bit too dark to be sure where she was. The kraken sank into the water beneath her and, suddenly, a great yellowy-green cloud of light burst forth into the water beneath her. It lit up the ocean for 20 metres in every direction and Katie found she could now easily make out the approaching waves.

Katie quickly picked one that was peaking in just the right place and stroked into the steep wall of water. As she jumped to her feet and began to glide across the face of the wave, the kraken rose up through the water so that he was just beneath her board, but still submerged, and he changed to a glowing lemon-colour with tracks of glittering blue, purple, pink and green flying over the skin of his body. Katie was so astounded by the beauty of it that she almost forgot about riding the wave she was on.

When she kicked out at the end of the wave, the kraken surfaced next to her and said, “That was fun Katie. Did you enjoy it?”

“That was one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen and probably the most amazing thing I have ever done Mr Kraken. Thank you.”

The kraken wheezed out another laugh and said, “Let’s do it again then.”

So Katie and the kraken surfed another ten waves together creating such a glorious spectacle on and under the water that, eventually, curiosity overcame fear for Nick, Miles and Molly, and they paddled out to the bar to see what was going on. They very nearly sprinted for shore again when Katie introduced the kraken but they all got

to know each other and had the most amazing surf of their lives until they finally paddled in, exhausted, at dawn. Katie dawdled long enough at the bar to say farewell to the kraken.

“Thank you Mr Kraken for the most amazing surf ever!”

“It was my pleasure Katie. I had a lot of fun and it was very nice to meet your friends,” the kraken sighed.

“Can we meet you again for a night surf?” Katie asked.

“Well Katie, I’m here most nights when there is a full moon and the waves are running, so come down to the beach and look for my fancy lights.” With which the kraken let off a shower of colour all over his body that was like a fireworks display.

“I have to go now Katie, before the sun comes up and damages my eyes. It was lovely to meet you and I look forward to ‘surfing’ with you again on the next full moon.”

“Goodbye Mr Kraken,” Katie stammered, feeling a bit sad to be farewelling her new friend. “I can’t wait to see you next full moon.”

The kraken slowly sank beneath the surface and, with a final burst of milky-green colour, he was gone.

Katie paddled back to shore and joined her friends on the walk back to her house for a shower and breakfast.

They were all so tired they could barely talk to each other.

“So who wants to go night surfing on the next full moon?” Katie asked.

Suddenly all three friends sprang back to life; “Me!” “Me!” “I do!” they all shouted.

Katie laughed to herself and started dreaming of the next surf with the kraken of Moonlight Bay.