The magic pencil

“I’m bored!” announced Archie folding his arms and stamping his foot.

“Dearie me,” smiled Grampy ruffling Archie’s hair with his old, wrinkled hand.

Archie sighed, “There is absolutely nothing to do. Boring, boring, boring!”

Grampy limped over to the scratched, wooden cupboard with the shiny metal handles and pulled open the heavy door. Slowly, carefully he searched through the shelves until he found what he was looking for.

“Here we go! This is just what you need to brighten up his day. Go over to the table in the sitting room and draw your favourite animal,” instructed Grampy handing Archie a stubby pencil and a crisp, white sheet of paper.Although he really wasn’t interested in Grampy’s suggestion, Archie did what he had been told. Thinking long and hard, he decided his favourite animal was probably a kangaroo.

Five minutes later, Archie was just completing the tail when he heard a strange drumming sound. It appeared to be coming from under the table. Like a throbbing heartbeat, the noise pulsed louder and louder until the table started to wobble and shake. All at once, an enormous shower of golden stars exploded as Archie’s kangaroo leapt from the page. Bouncing wildly along the carpet, the creature began to grow bigger and bigger and bigger until it was a fully grown, adult kangaroo.

Astonishingly, it smiled, winked and began to speak.

“Good day Archie. How are you doing, mate? Why not hop into my pouch and I’ll take you on an adventure of a life time! Hop in,” instructed the kangaroo holding open her pouch with her furry, brown paw.

Without hesitation, Archie scrambled into the warm, furry pocket. Surprisingly, it was extremely comfortable and Archie felt safe and secure. Although he was completely bewildered, Archie held on to the top of the pouch and waited for the adventure to begin.

“Call me Sheila,” the kangaroo told Archie.

“Okay Sheila. What happens next?” replied Archie with an excited smile.

“Hold tight and close your eyes!”

Sheila bounced once, twice, three times. Higher and higher she jumped.

“Here we are,” shouted Sheila.

Archie peered around him. The sky was brilliant blue; the warmth of the sun tickled his cheek and in the distance he could see a huge, red, mountainous rock rising up, up, up and glowing in the early morning light. At its base, there were tall, straggly trees with branches like jagged fingers reaching to the sky.

“Wow!” whispered Archie.

“Amazing, isn’t it! That’s Uluru – the ancient rock of the Aborigine people. It’s sacred and very, very special. Welcome to Australia, Archie!” grinned Sheila.

Bounce, bounce, bounce. Sheila’s magical bouncing powers propelled them hundreds of miles across massive emerald forests filled with every kind of magnificent multi-coloured parrot, cuddly koala and slithering snake.

“This is breath-taking. It’s just so beautiful,” gasped Archie.

Without warning, the brilliant blue sky became dark and threatening. A horrible, burning, smoky smell scratched at Archie’s nose and his eyes began to water. Blackened tree stumps and scorched earth replaced the succulent trees. No birds sang. No animals scampered. Nothing grew. Nothing moved.

“This is dreadful!” wailed Archie.

“Yes it is. Once this was beautiful forest but now it’s burnt and desolate,” said Sheila, a tear trickling sadly down her furry cheek.

“But why?” asked Archie.

“Forest fires have raged through parts of Australia, Archie. Fires caused by unbearably hot summers and extreme conditions caused by climate change. Humans have been polluting the atmosphere for so long that they’ve changed the weather and this is the result. If they just stopped burning so much fossil fuel it could be better. Walk instead of taking the car every day; switch off lights when you’re not in the room; only put on the central heating when you’re really cold. If every family in your town did just one thing to help, just think how much we could achieve. Help us Archie, help us. Help us Archie, help us ……….”

All at once, Archie felt himself land with an enormous bump. He was lying on the floor of Grampy’s sitting room. Beside him was a crumpled drawing of a kangaroo.

“Grampy, Grampy! You’ll never guess where I’ve been!” shouted Archie.

“Well, well. Looks to me like you’ve been to sleep!” chuckled Grampy.

“No, no, no – I can’t have been. I’ve been to Australia with Sheila and I’ve seen ……”

“Hmm. I need to get some shopping, Archie. Hop in the car and you can tell me all about it,” smiled Grampy.

“No, Grampy. The shop isn’t far, we should walk,” explained Archie.

“Walk?” enquired Grampy.

“Yep, we’ve all got to do our bit to sort out climate change, Grampy and if that means walking to the shops, then that’s what we’ve got to do. Come on,” said Archie taking Grampy by the hand.

Together, they locked the door and ambled down the road whilst on the sitting room floor, the crumpled paper slowly floated to the table and letter by letter the words THANK YOU ARCHIE appeared beneath the picture of a smiling kangaroo.