

The dentist raised a mirror to show Kim her face. She slowly opened her eyes and smiled.

"Wow!" she shrieked. You could hardly see them.

"See, nothing to worry about at all," said the dentist with a smile.



The next day Kim rode into school on her bike. She met her friend Hannah at the school gates.

"Let's have a look, then," said Hannah.

Kim smiled at her.

"Nice," beamed Hannah. "You can hardly see them."

"Hah, metal mouth!" shouted a voice from across the playground.

It was Olivia with her friends. She was the biggest girl in their year and she never had anything nice to say.



“OK, Mum. Look after Ziggy for me. When I get back we can go down to the beach and set him free, back into the sea.”

“Ziggy?” asked her mum.

Laura smiled. “Yep, Ziggy. He has a zigzag mark over one of his eyes.”

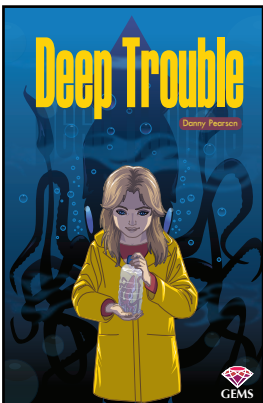
Her mum laughed. “Very good, Laura, now off you go.”

Laura finished her breakfast and made her way to school.

Her dad was still unpacking. He walked up into Laura’s room with the last of the boxes.

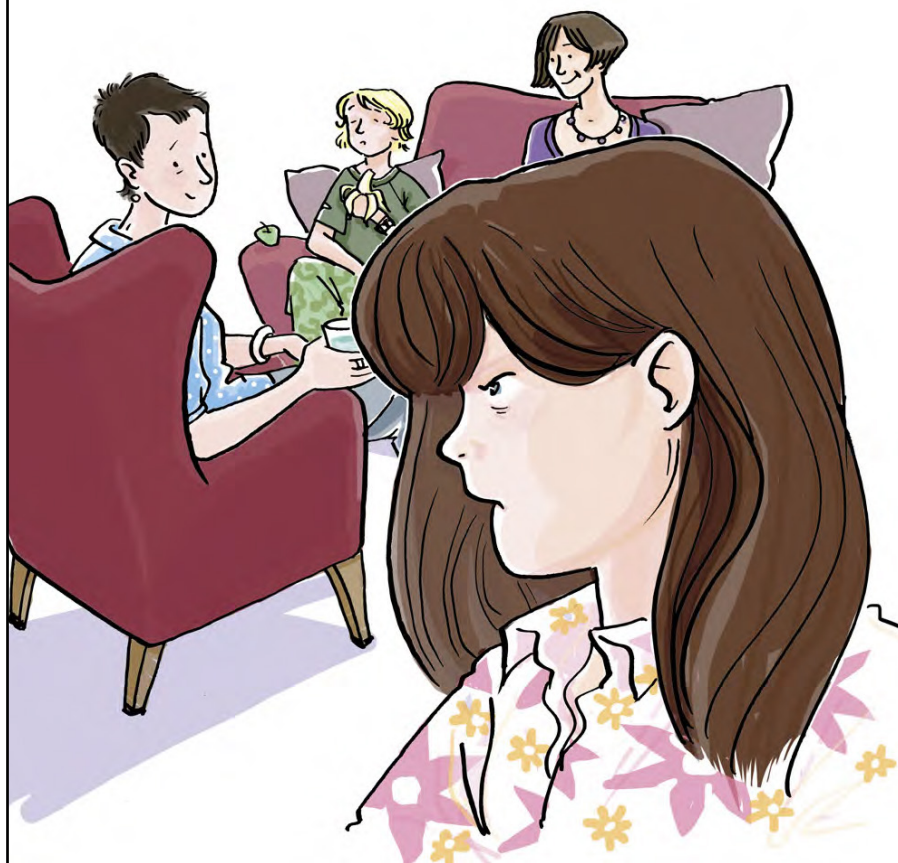
“What on earth is that!” he cried, looking at the squid swimming around in its tank. “Disgusting creature!”

He picked the tank up and marched to the bathroom. He started to empty the tank down into the toilet.



“Probably just an ordinary beetle,” said William.

It so was *not*!



### Chapter 3

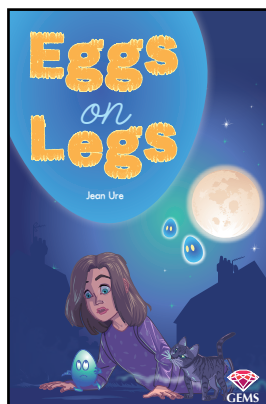
## Rescue!

At six o'clock Auntie Meg said she and William must be going. Lara breathed a sigh of relief. At last! They all went to the door to say goodbye.

“Don't forget the writing competition,” said Auntie Meg.

“Can't think of anything to write about,” said Lara.

William sniggered. “You could always write about your egg thing!”





All Jess's family had magic skills. Oscar was a gnome who could turn things into gold.

Lily was a fairy who could grant wishes (if they were good ones).

Edwin could heal animals that drank from the pools where he washed his silver horn. Although, these days, it was easier to hand out bottles of healing water. That was Jess's job.

Jess was a malekin – a human child brought up by magic folk.

But now she had to go to school. For the first time. Ever.

Whose bright idea was that?



"We'll be fine, Mum!" I insisted. "You two go and have a nice time. Your wedding anniversary only comes once a year."

"I know you'll be fine," my mum said, "it's your sister I'm concerned about."



Ella slumped against the wall and studied her black fingernails through a mass of shocking pink and black hair. "What have I done now?" she groaned.

"Nothing – yet," Mum replied. "But the last time we left you here to babysit for Andrea, several dozen of your emu friends just happened to drop in to have a party..."

Ella tutted. "They're not called emus – it's emo!"

"Ella..."



## Chapter 2

# Georgia

“You’re in!”

“And you!”

“Those shoes are well nice – bit like mine!”

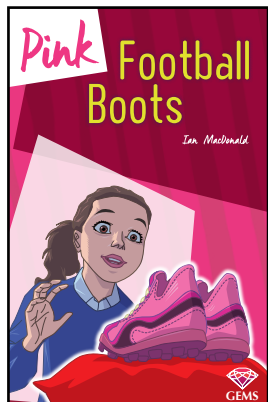
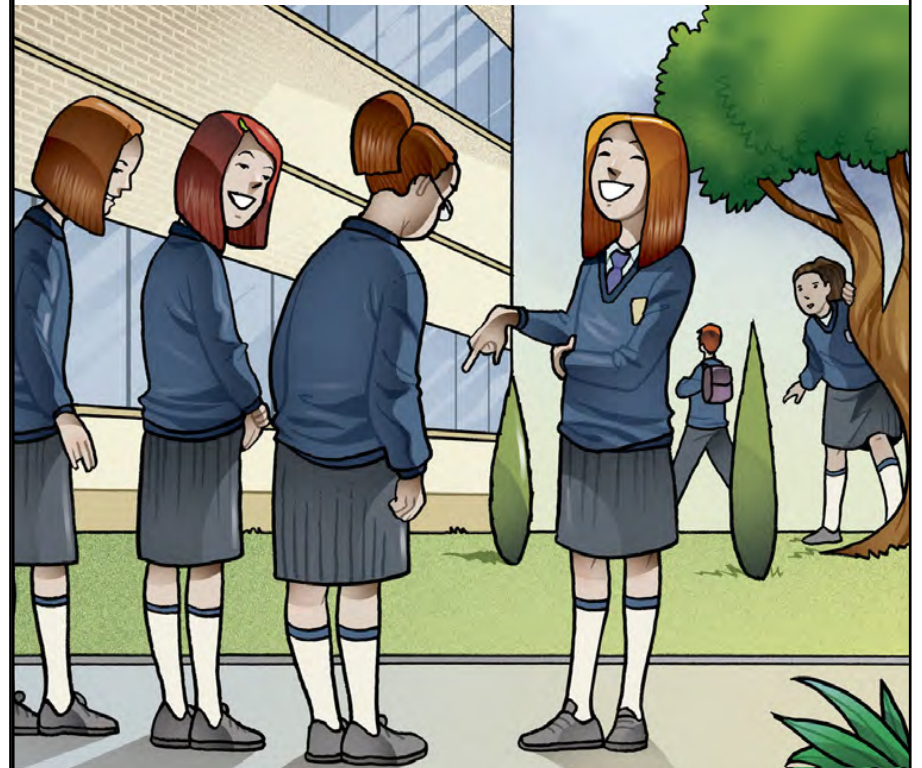
Georgia prowled the line, like a tiger pacing its cage. Deciding who was in, who was out.

If you had the latest shoes, or turned your collar up the right way, you were in. Georgia said so; no one argued.

At the end stood Laura Treetops, hoping Georgia wouldn’t notice her. No such luck!

“What are those... things you’re wearing?” demanded Georgia.

“Mum can’t buy me new ones, not till she gets paid,” muttered Laura, looking down at her worn shoes.





Zel's ears moved forward and she looked eager and excited.

Zelda and Sam loved riding together and going over the jumps in the field next to the riding stables.

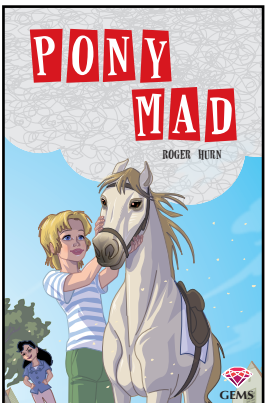
Sam was chatting away to Zel as she saddled up. Then she heard a sneering voice say, "You treat that pony like it was your best friend, Samantha. But it isn't. It's only a dumb animal."

Sam turned to see Araminta standing there. Sam's heart sank. Araminta had a mean look on her face.

Her mum and dad were rich.

They gave Araminta the best of everything. So, when she demanded a pony they bought her Belladonna.

Belladonna was beautiful, but Sam felt sorry for her. Araminta treated her as just another one of her many playthings.



Then she turned and spoke to the young woman sitting next to her.

The woman nodded, then stood up and left the VIP box.

“Wow!” said Jenni. “That was awesome! Princess Mel actually waved to us like we were her friends.”

“She did,” agreed Keesha. “That’s what makes her so cool.”

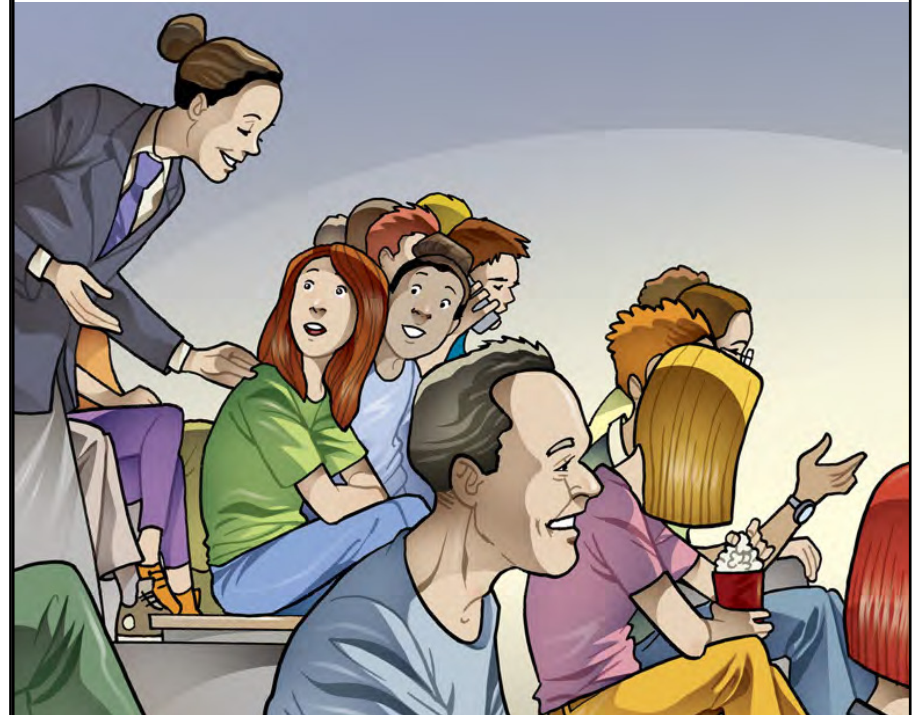
The two girls were so busy chatting they didn’t notice the young woman come up and stand behind them.

She tapped Jenni on the shoulder.

“Hello. I’m Susan, Princess Melanie’s Lady-in-Waiting. Princess Melanie has sent me to ask you two girls to come and join her in the VIP box.”

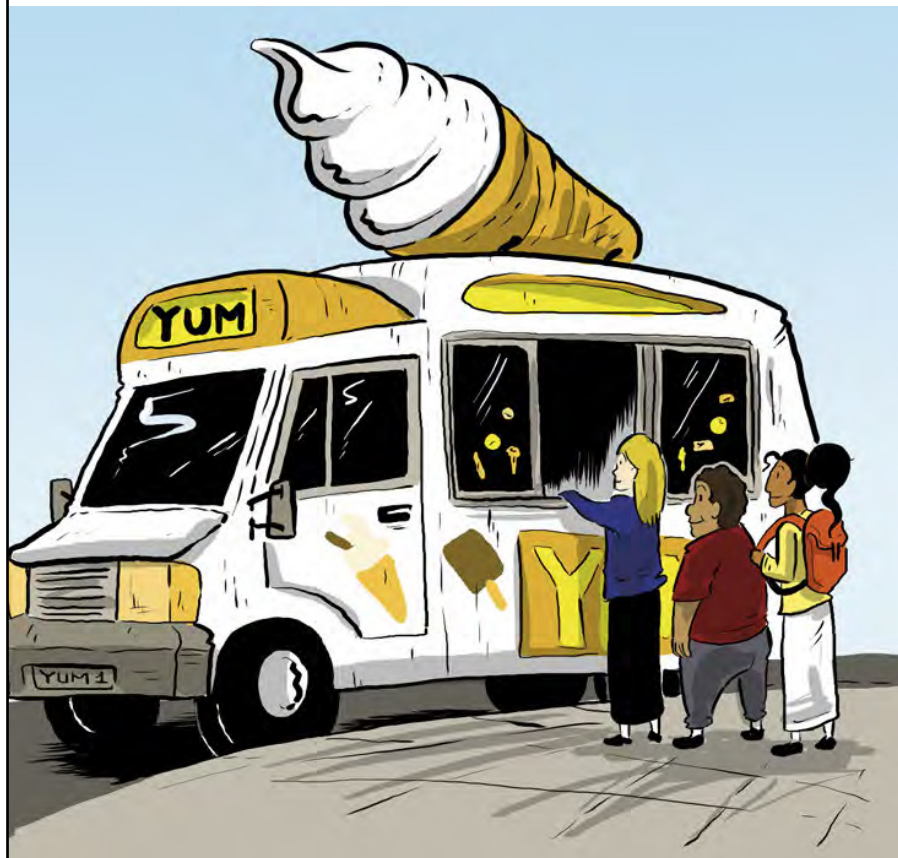
Jenni and Keesha’s mouths fell open.

They couldn’t believe their ears!





Millie was there first. She peered over the counter. The outside of the van was brightly decorated with pictures of lollies, choc-bars and cornets. On the roof was a giant, plastic ice-cream cone. But the windows had been blacked out, making it strangely dark inside.



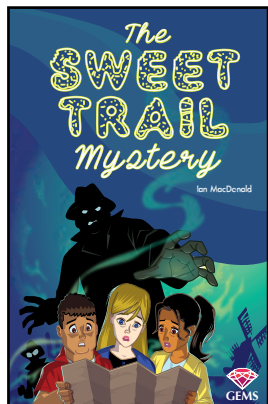
“A giant whopper, please,” said Millie, holding out a few coins. No reply.

“Er... anybody there?” she began.

From out of the gloom came a large hand holding a dripping cone. Startled, Millie stepped back, her coins clattering to the pavement. Inside the van, a shadow moved.

Sami began picking up the coins, but Jade had wandered to the back of the van. One window was slightly open. She could just make out a brown cardboard box against the glass. Taking a pencil from her bag, she poked at the box.

Suddenly, the van set off down the road.



“Melody, dear... We don’t read at the dinner table, sweetie.”

I lowered the newspaper, and there they were. The goody-goody foster parents themselves – smiling. They were *always* smiling. Nothing ever seemed to upset them – and it drove me mad.

But what drove me even madder was the person sitting between them: their ‘adorable’ daughter, Rose-Petal (yes, that’s *really* her name).

She was the same age as me, but you’d never know it. I’d never seen anyone wear so much pink in one go.

Just looking at her made my eyes sting.

I’d been living with the Soper family ever since my parents were arrested a month before for trying to drill into the Earth’s core. Was it only a month? It felt like years.

