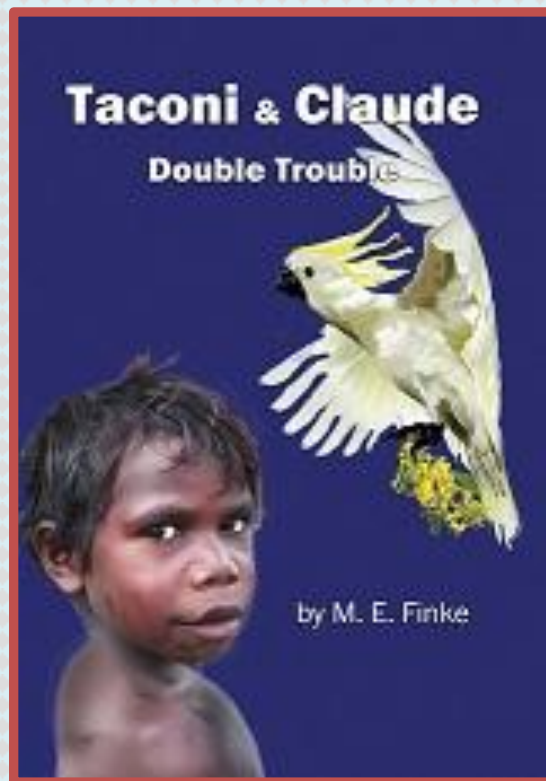


Taconi and Claude's BIG 2011 Adventure

This *Free* short story introduces you
to the characters in my new mid-grade book . . .

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Guardian Angel Publishing

Plus . . .

Two troublesome new mates.

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A midgrade adventure set on a cattle station in the Aussie outback, circa 1950.

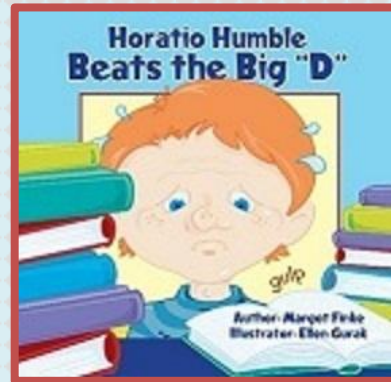
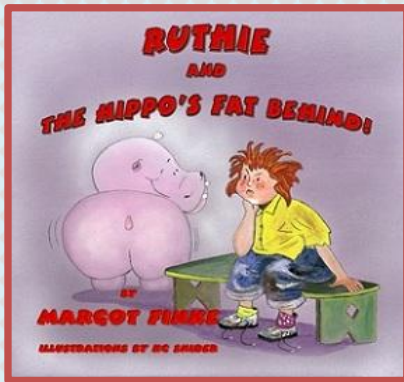
Website links + how and where to BUY.

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<http://www.margotfinke.com>

Meet Taconi's New Mates.

Two kids who escaped from my other books.



RUTHIE is the crabby girl in my *Ruthie and the Hippo's Fat Behind*.
She finds **BIG** changes super hard to deal with.

HORATIO HUMBLE is the boy in *Horatio Humble Beats the Big D*.
A boy who works hard to overcome Dyslexia.

Author:
Margot Finke

Note:

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*Share these fun words from Down-under
with your friends:*

Billabong – a deep water hole in a creek or river

Dreamtime – where aboriginals believe they come from and go back to when it is time. Dreamtime spirits live in all natural things.

Jackaroo – man who drives or herds cattle on horseback

Two-up – a game played with two coins thrown up in the air

Man Ceremony – a secret initiation all aboriginal boys must go through before being considered men of their tribe.

Boab Tree – barrel trunked outback tree

Fairdinkum – true or real

Blimey – surprise

Cripes – amazement, whoda thunk it!

Put a sock in it – be quiet or shut up

Beaut – great or good

Bonzer – terrific or great

Goanna – large lizard type critter

Witchetty Grubs – yummy white grubs: like cutworms

Dill – idiot, silly.

Termite Mounds - large, cement hard mounds termites construct for their home.

Yabbies – similar to freshwater crayfish

Emu – large flightless bird



Tribal gathering fire.

Chapter One

Somewhere in the outback heart of Australia . . .



Ayers Rock (Uluru) in the heart of the Australian outback

In the early 1950s, just a boomerang throw from Uluru and the Dreamtime, an aboriginal boy named Taconi accidentally touched a secret place on the sacred Boab tree.

WHOOSH! He and his good mate Claude suddenly found themselves on a magic carpet ride, slap bang into the year 2011.

Claude squawked, "*Hit the brakes, mate. Hit the brakes!*" His head crest sprung up and down and his feathers flew.

Taconi, goggle-eyed with surprise, yelled, "*Stone the crows, mate, I only touch that flippin Boab once.*"

But the deed was done, so with Claude on his shoulder, Taconi had to figure out a way to deal with the 21st century until they could find a way back to the 1950s.



An Aussie yabby.

There were no yabbies, or witchetty grubs on the sidewalks of the Big Smoke. No jackaroos herding cattle on their horses either. There **WAS** a pub named The Railway Hotel, just as his dad had warned him, so he and Claude hurried past.

" *Wonder if they have two-up games like Dad said?*"

" *Betcha boots, mate. Betcha Boots!*" cackled Claude.

The hot asphalt was hard on Taconi's bare feet, and there wasn't a Medicine Man in sight.

"Blimey, not a kangaroo anywhere."

Cars whizzed past. They looked nothing like the new 1950 model the Boss of Coorparoo Station had thought so up-to-date. These cars were sleek and rounded: like a big snake with places to slither - fast!

"Cripes, the Big Smoke's like Dad said, only faster, more confusin' and real scary," Taconi told Claude.

"Hit the road Jack. Hit the road!" advised Claude.

"If I knew where to head I would," said Taconi. *"Look at the clothes people are wearin'."*

"Skimpy! Skimpy! Skimpy!" muttered Claude.

"Yeah, but less IS cooler in this heat - right?" Taconi looked in some of the shop windows. He had heard tales about what you could buy in big towns, and the 21st century offered as many choices as a dog had fleas.



Claude: a sulfur crested cockatoo

"I look a bit of a dill in these shorts and bare feet, fairdinkum. Everyone's dressed for a party."

"Party pooper gets the chop," said Claude, preening his tail feathers.

"Look, there's a kid not dressed up - rips in her pants and socks don't match."



Ruthie's miss-matched socks and untied sneakers.

The kid stared at them. She wore a frown, a shirt with holes, and her sneaker laces were untied and dragging in the dirt.

"Are you trying to 'out mess' me?" she asked. *"I'm protesting, that's why I look this way. What's your excuse?"*

"We kinda got dropped here by the Boab," explained Taconi.

"You always messy and rude?"

"Rude dudes rule!" said Claude.

"Jimmy, a talking bird." The rude girl's frown was replaced by a look of amazement.

"What's it's name?"

"I'm Taconi. He's Claude, a sulfur crested cockatoo. He's about seventy years old and my best mate."

"Seventy and Counting. Counting, counting, counting," chortled Claude.

"Awesome," said the scruffy girl. She patted Claude's head.

"What's your name?" asked Taconi.

"I'm Ruthie. I hate everything and everyone - especially my mom and dad." She looked them both up and down. **"Anyway, who's this Boab that dumped you here? He some kind of babysitter?"**

Taconi laughed and Claude gave a cackle. **"The Boab's a "what " not a who. And it's a long story."**

"Long stories - boring, boring, boring." added Claude.

"Well mine's a short story. My parents moved. Now I have no friends, no fun, and a pink hippo that stalks me." Her face crumpled, and a tear slid down her cheek.

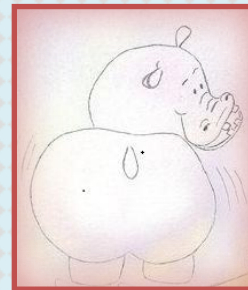
"I want to go h-o-m-e!" Ruthie wailed.

"Only crocodile tears. Big crocodile tears," said Claude.

"Put a sock in it, Claude." Taconi turned to Ruthie and added, **"Help us find way home, and we'll help you find mates to play with."** He thought for a moment. **"Parents need kids to love em' too."**

Ruthie looked doubtful. **"I guess we could give it a try. Being grumpy and throwing tantrums all the time is hard work. And that pink hippo follows me everywhere. Not friendly at all. His fat behind makes me nervous."** She frowned. **"I made Mom cry last week. Almost made me wear matching socks and tie my laces real neat - almost."**

"Almost never cuts it, girly," muttered Claude.



Phantom Pink Hippo!



Just then, a huge rattling school bus almost squished Taconi into Big Smoke road kill. He shuddered. "Cripes, Dad was right. Big Smoke's not for me. I need red dust

between toes, billabong water, and the smell of goanna steak. Even meetin' up with that crazy emu from Boss Howard's party would be beaut right now."

Legs apart, hands on hips, Ruthie declared, *"You two are definitely weirdoes. What we need is Facebook - maybe even Twitter! The Internet can help you find your way home and me find new friends – maybe? Or "friend" my old ones so we can stay in touch."* The mere thought put a smile on her face.

"Beware the crazy girl. Beware, beware!" Claude screeched, flapping his wings.

Puzzled, Taconi asked, *"Facebook? Internet? Never heard of 'em."*

Chapter Two

Ruthie stared open-mouthed at Taconi and his feathered mate.

"Have you been living under a rock or something? This is 2011. If you're not on Facebook and Twitter you're nowhere." Ruthie sucked in a deep breath. *"Old dudes and young dudes, grannies and moms, they all friend and tweet."*

Taconi shrugged. *"We're new in 2011. Before I touch that Boab tree, we safe in 1950's. Tweets there come from birds."*

"Four and twenty tweety birds baked in a pie!" Claude chortled



Granny on Facebook

"Books I seen have covers not faces." Taconi continued. *"Books my dad have show food - white man's food. . . No faces."*

Unnoticed, a boy clutching a pile of books had been listening to them. *"What's all the fuss about books? You just dive in and read them."*

They stared at the boy . Neat and tidy, in blue shorts and sandals, he wore a white tee-shirt that said, "DYSLEXIA - Diagnose Early - READ."

"Read till you drop, mate. Read! Read! Read!" said the cockatoo.

The boy gawped at Claude. *"Wow! A talking bird. Cool."* His grin was friendly. *"I'm Horatio Humble. What are your names?"*

Grumpy at the interruption, Ruthie said, *"I'm Ruthie, and the nearly naked boy is Taconi. The big mouthed bird is Claude."*

Taconi stared at the books. *"You gona' read all those?"*

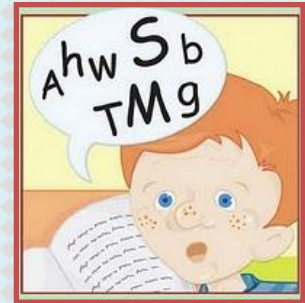
"Sure am," said Horatio. *"I've got a lot of reading time to catch up on."*

"You do?" Taconi looked puzzled

"Yeah." Horatio pointed to the words on his tee shirt. *"I have Dyslexia. It kinda messes with the letters in every word. You can't read them."* For a moment he looked glum. *"I dreaded being asked to read in class. Kids giggled and laughed, and the teacher always gave me an "F."*

"At first Dyslexia made me feel dumb. I hated that. But once I learned how to zap it, and make the letters behave and not jump around, reading was as easy as math."

Taconi sighed. *"My dad says aboriginal boy only needs to read the land and sky. Readin' that tells the important stuff: like findin' witchetty grubs and water in prickly pear. He tell me book readin's for city blokes."*



Horatio and the messy words he couldn't read.



Yummy witchetty grubs!

Ruthie stamped her foot. *"You two are just weirdos! Weird names, and weird food."* She sorted in disgust, her red hair on end, her pants half-mast. *"I guess Facebook and Twitter won't help either of you."*

"Dump the grumpy red head! Dump the redhead!" screeched Claude. His beady eye glared at her.

Ruthie glared right back.



Grumpy ole Ruthie.

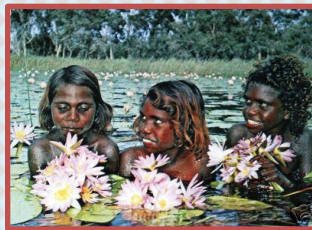
"Jumpin Grasshoppers mate, I'd try anythin' that took me back to 1950." Desperation echoed in Taconi's voice.

"WOW! I just finished reading a book about time travel. An excellent read." Horatio winked at Taconi. "Let's noodle together and find a way to send you back to your time zone."

"Birds of a feather travel together," advised Claude.

"What about me? I hate this town. No friends. No one to play with. How can noodling help me?"

Taconi and Horatio looked at each other. Taconi spoke first. ***"Aboriginal girls have plenty of mates when they kind and friendly. Mean girls stay alone."***



Friendly young aboriginal girls are mates

Horatio added, ***"I guess attitude rules, Ruthie. If you give mean, you get mean right back at you."***

Ruthie looked ready to cry. ***"When I lived back home I was happy. I was nice to everyone." She sniffled loudly. "Only after we moved here did my mean and cranky side take over."***

Claude cocked his head and said, ***"Kick the mean and cranky mate. Let friendship rule."***

Even Ruthie laughed at this one liner. So the three unlikely new friends strolled to the nearby botanical gardens and plotted their future.

CHAPTER THREE

It was cool under the shade of the trees in the botanical gardens - a Flame Tree in a froth of scarlet blossoms, sturdy Frangipani with their covering of scented flowers, and a gigantic Camphor Laurel.



Jacaranda Tree

They wandered down the path to a pond where ducks were quacking, and flopped down under the lacy canopy of a purple flowered Jacaranda tree. Horatio stacked his books beside him.



Quackers!

Claude, always curious, began investigating the ducks and the pond. Loud quacks of disapproval soon came to them.

"What does noodling do?" asked Taconi. *"Will it send me back to the outback and Dreamtime?"*

Horatio laughed. Ruthie's mouth twitched. *"No Taconi. Noodling means talking things over, and then planning what might work."* He lay back on the grass, hands behind his head. *"I've read about the outback, but what's this Dreamtime stuff?"*

"I thought Dreamtime was after your mum tucked you in and you went to sleep." Ruthie sighed. *"I always dream I'm back in our old home, playing with friends or visiting my Grandma."*

Taconi caught a drifting Jacaranda flower. *"Dreamtime important to aboriginal fella. Dreamtime spirits live everywhere in outback: in Boab tree, inside mountain, in billabong water. It's where tribe comes from - where aboriginal fella go when it's time. Dreamtime Spirits make all things. They came when time was a baby - they see all things, know all things."*

"WOW! That's the most radical thing I've ever heard." Horatio's eyes widened with the wonder of it.

"Oh, come on. You really want us to. . ." began Ruthie.

Horatio interrupted with a wave of his hand. *"Remember now. Smiles catch more friends than grumps."*

Claude returned in time to hear this. *"Kill the grumps! Kill the Grumps!"* he



squawked loudly, fluttering onto a low branch.

"It's REALLY hard to change," complained Ruthie. "I need time. But I guess you're right - and so's THAT bird. I definitely need to kill the grumps if I'm to make any friends."

"Three cheers for the red-head," Claude chortled through the lavender flower in his beak.

"That Boab tree sent me here," muttered Taconi, picking a lady bug off his bare legs. "Maybe I need another Boab to send me back?"

Ruthie grinned. *"That's the smartest bit of noodling we've heard so far."*

"You're right." Horatio laughed and grabbed his books. "Let's see if this Botanical Garden runs to magical Boab's!"

The three searched pathways, gentle slopes and the higher ground for over an hour, yet found nothing Taconi could identify as a Boab Tree.



Finally, they all slumped onto the grass beneath a plot of native Australian trees - gums, bottlebrush, and yellow flowering wattle.

Claude fluttered to the top most branches of a large paper-bark gum.

"I'm really sorry, Taconi. I was SO sure we'd find at least one magic Boab Tree that would do the trick." Ruthie patted his bare shoulder.

"Yeah, tough break." Horatio brightened. "Would you like me to read you a story? I'm a pretty good reader now." He patted the books at his side. "You choose."

"Thanks mate. But I gotta keep searchin' for that Boab. You blokes good mates, but Dreamtime has a loud call. The further you move from outback land the louder Spirits call."

Taconi stood and looked around for Claude.

A flutter of wings and the bird landed on his shoulder. *"Boab is hiding. Boab is hiding,"* cried Claude, feathers ruffled and head crest up.



Sacred Site

Taconi stared at him. *"Claude, you know the secret! Where? Where?"*

The cockatoo whispered in his ear and Taconi took off. Ruthie, with Horatio lugging his books, ran after them. The two of them were soon puffing like steam engines, hard pressed to keep up.

Suddenly there it was, tucked into a back lot of land, and half hidden by acacia bushes and gum trees: a small Boab tree.

"I think this is the tree nursery," said Ruthie.

Panting, Horatio dropped his books and patted Claude's head. *"Good for you birdie. You're one awesome cockatoo."*

Claude preened his ruffled feathers into shape and looked smug.

"Now what?" asked Ruthie.

Taconi just stared at the small Boab tree, every muscle in his body tense. *"Go for broke, mate. Go for broke,"* muttered Claude.

Taconi stole closer, his feet barely touching the grass. Then he turned and looked at his two new mates, a grin on his face. *"If this works, I'll zip away real fast - like last time. Thanks for helpin' me. You blokes been bonzer mates."*

"It was fun, Taconi. Meeting someone from the 20th century is totally rad. Guess no one will believe any of it though." Horatio looked sad.



A happy Ruthie

"Cheer up Horatio. You met me. That counts too you know. You and I are 21 century kids. We belong here: Taconi and Claude don't belong. They need to go home to their Dreamtime land." She waved her arm around to include all of them. *"You all helped me ditch my grumpy ways and now, Horatio, I have you as a friend."*

Horatio and Ruthie high-fived.

"Do what Claude said, Taconi: go for it. And we'll both remember you and your Dreamtime land forever-and-ever." She gave Taconi a small push toward the waiting Boab tree.

"Ruthie's right Taconi. Remember us too: your 21st century mates."

Ruthie's hand crept into Horatio's. Together the two new friends held their breath hoping the Dreamtime magic would work.

With Claude on his shoulder, Taconi put out a hand and gently stroked the rough and rounded trunk of the Boab. A tingling sensation fizzed through his veins. He felt giddy. His stomach did a fast summersault. He closed his eyes. Claude screeched, and then a vast blackness descended.

When he opened his eyes, he was sitting beside a billabong at sunset: a kangaroo with a small Joey in her pouch drank nearby.

The water gurgled and splashed over cool stones. The familiar sights and sounds of the Aussie outback brought tears to Taconi's eyes. "We made it home, mate," he whispered.



Claude chuckled his approval, and then he rubbed his beak over Taconi's cheek.

Away from the gum trees that shaded the billabong water, termite mounds baked in the afternoon sun. And at a distance, its roots deep in the Dreamtime's outback heart, stood the ancient Boab tree that had sent him on a fantastic journey into 2011 - the future.



Ancient Boab tree at sunset.

**"Dreamtime's the heart, mate. The bloomin' heart!"
Claude had the last word - as usual.**

If you enjoyed my short story about:

“Taconi and Claude’s BIG 2011 Adventure”

read my

“Taconi and Claude – Double Trouble”

*A midgrade adventure for kids
who love excitement, danger and fun!*

Join *Taconi* and *Claude* on Coorparoo Cattle Station in the Australian outback territory. The time is the mid nineteen hundreds. Share Taconi’s fears about the mysteries of his Man Ceremony, a problem Dad, fierce biting green ants, and a crazed emu. Not to mention Dreamtime Spirits who have their own ideas about his future. And finally, experience the huge tribal gathering that seals Taconi’s fate.

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